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THE

TEACHER TEACHING:

A

PRACTICAL VIEW

OF THE

RELATIONS AND DUTIES OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE TEACHER TAUGHT."

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PREFACE.

THE twenty years which have elapsed since "*The Teacher Taught*" was first published have witnessed many important changes in the administration of our Sunday-schools. Whether they are for the better, time will determine.

In common with other departments of education, the Sunday-school has derived an impetus from the spirit of the age, similar to that given to commerce and the industrial arts, and has taken a more conspicuous position in the public eye than at any former period.

Whatever moral or intellectual power it has accumulated in the long interval, none will deny that it has been quite insufficient to meet the legitimate demand upon its benevolent agency; and though there may be much more prominence given to it than formerly, it may not have materially strengthened its claim to the confidence and sympathy of the Christian Church.

Like other institutions relving on popular

opinion for their sustenance, the Sunday-school must be judged by its fruits. These will be more or less abundant (other things being equal) according to the skill and diligence of those who are actively engaged in its service.

Simple as is its organization, the power of a good Sunday-school is immeasurable, and so, too, is the power of a Christian parent; but in both cases a certain kind and degree of effort are needful to give it efficiency. It has no head of water or force of steam to set it in motion. The communion of mind with mind and heart with heart is indispensable to its proper development, and how to secure this is a problem that parents and teachers are bound to study.

Perhaps there are few departments of human science in which greater advances have been made in late years than that of horticulture. It is really amazing to observe the almost indefinite multiplication of fruits and vegetables, and the perfection to which their cultivation is carried. And it will be found that many minds have been employed for years in the study of the habits and dispositions of trees and vines and vegetables. No labour or expense is spared to secure the best varieties and the largest products. To stimulate the ambition of cultivators, large premiums are offered, and a public show made from time to

time of the extraordinary products of skill and industry. Whether attention to the tender plants in that part of the garden of the Lord assigned to Sunday-school teachers has been given in any thing like the same ratio we do not say. But of this we are quite confident,—that few teachers, looking at their own section, can ask with much assurance, "What more could I have done for it that I have not done?"

If the relations of the Sunday-school and the Christian Church are what they should be, the corps of teachers in the school will represent the intelligence and spirituality of the Church. As the sympathy of the followers of Christ with the degraded worshippers of false gods can be measured only by their efforts and sacrifices for their enlightenment and conversion, so their interest in the Christian nurture of the children and youth of the country is fairly indicated by the zeal and liberality with which they sustain an agency instituted for that end.

In most Christian communities there are those who are not only willing but forward to contribute to the support of the Sunday-school. It is generally a popular institution. There is also for the most part a supply of teachers whose readiness to serve is highly commendable; but it is to be feared that the responsibilities of the disciples

of Christ, *as such*, to see to it that the lambs are properly fed, is very imperfectly felt; and hence the difficult task is too often assigned to those whose chief qualification is—a laudable desire to be useful.

The design of the present treatise is to bring more distinctly to view the relations of the Sunday-school to the Church and the world. The general principles of the system as administered in our country are briefly set forth, but the details of organization, instruction, &c., are not within the scope of the volume.*

The author is aware that many of his positions will be controverted by those to whose judgment and experience he gives willing deference; but to have our opinions controverted, and perhaps repudiated, is one of the sacrifices which pride must make for the establishment of truth.

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* These are presented in "*The Teacher Taught*," an improved edition of which has just been published.

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PART I.

THE

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OF THE

SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

THE

TEACHER TEACHING.

CHAPTER I.

THE MUTUAL RELATIONS OF SUNDAY-SCHOOLS AND THE TEACHERS IN THEM.

§ 1. *The place and purpose of the Sunday-school.*

How long the Sunday-school will be regarded as an important agency for diffusing a knowledge of the Bible and inculcating those moral and religious truths which are received by Protestant churches generally as divinely inspired, depends upon its obvious fitness and efficiency to that end. Whenever its inadequacy to fulfil this exalted mission is seen or shown, it will give place to some other scheme,—as horses have given place to steam as a motive power, and stage-coaches to cars, on the thoroughfares of travel. In this practical age and country, useless or fruitless enterprises are short-lived, and false pretences are sooner or later exposed and abandoned.

The position which the Sunday-school shall hold in the confidence and affection of Christian people (and, indeed, all people of intelligence whether professed Christians or not) must depend on the skill and success with which it is conducted; and the measure of these

will be determined, not by the size of libraries, the patronage of periodicals, the verses and hymns recited, nor by the number of children enrolled or in attendance, but by their fruits as seen in the *character of those who receive their teaching and training in them.* These incidental circumstances are not without importance, but they bear very lightly on the grand result,—*the thorough religious teaching of a generation.* So that, in fact, not only the prosperity, but the very existence, of Sunday-schools depends, humanly speaking, on the fitness and fidelity of those who are called to serve as TEACHERS.

The religious instruction of all classes of children on the Lord's day by voluntary teachers, who are for the most part professors of religion, is a system unknown to any former age. The signal tokens of divine favour which have been shown to it may well excite our wonder and gratitude, while its almost universal popularity in our country gives it peculiar advantages and, perhaps, exposes it to peculiar dangers. When we contemplate the aggregate influence of two or three hundred thousand Christian teachers over the minds of two or three millions of children and youth whom they meet every Lord's day for the purpose of instructing them in divine truth, we are justified in expecting great things,—much greater than we have yet seen.

The Sunday-school must be regarded as a most inviting field of Christian effort. In no other position within reach of most private Christians can diligence and faithfulness accomplish so much for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Quite humble lite-

rary attainments, and a very limited portion of time well improved, will accomplish wonders in a Sunday-school. It is a most hopeful province of philanthropy. It would be difficult to find the post in which larger and more favourable opportunities are afforded to minister to the temporal and spiritual necessities of families and neighbourhoods, to cheer the despondent, enlighten the ignorant, reclaim the vicious, and confirm the well-disposed, than in that which the Sunday-school teacher occupies. It is, moreover, a most profitable means of self-improvement. Besides the familiar promise, that he that watereth shall be watered himself,—which has been verified to thousands of teachers,—there is a direct and positive intellectual advantage. No one has taught long and faithfully, without acquiring a familiarity with the subject taught which nothing but teaching would supply.

What is the teacher to the children in the Sunday-school? He is what the labourer is to the field,—to prepare the ground and sow the seed. He is what the parent is to his household,—to instruct and train them for the service of God and their fellow-men. He is what the miner is to the mine,—to bring forth hidden treasures. So should the teacher draw out the faculties and affections of the soul and raise them to worthy objects. He is what the physician is to his patient,—making him the subject of ceaseless anxiety and heartfelt sympathy, and using all diligence and skill to relieve suffering and restore health. He is what the pastor is to his people,—to oversee and care for their spiritual interests, and persuade them to live above the world while they live in it, and use it as not abusing it.

Whatever advances may have been made during the last five-and-twenty years in the art of Sunday-school teaching, it is still not beyond improvement. In whatever measure the experience, influence and intelligence of the church is given to the religious culture of children and youth, there is ample room for more. That there has been of late years much more free and intelligent discussion of the modes and forms of diffusing religious knowledge and influence, (especially by means of Sunday-schools,) and a large increase of the number and activity of agencies for this end, no one will deny. And to the praise of the glory of God's grace it may be added, that thousands upon thousands from our Sunday-school forms have joined themselves to the people of God, and are among the most active and willing labourers in the Lord's vineyard. Such considerations should not minister to pride or vainglory, but should stimulate us to more diligence and self-denial.

Of the power and fitness of the Sunday-school as an instrument to give a religious character to a generation, we have no doubt; and had the zeal and liberality and piety of the people of God been active and warm enough to have put such a school wherever there was a needy population to welcome it, and if, when established, it had received the intelligent and hearty sympathy of the Saviour's professed friends, we are confident that the current of public sentiment this day on any topic of general interest in any part of the United States would have set irresistibly in favour of truth and right. Few dwellings would to-day have been destitute of a copy of the Scriptures; few families, very few, would have been without the friend-

ship and counsel of one or more Christian friends; and few cases of suffering, physical or mental, would have failed to receive seasonable sympathy and relief. This is a sort of systematic visitation which, we need not say, falls naturally and necessarily into the province of Sunday-school teachers. They have an errand to the home of every child; and the children of every house should have an errand to the Sunday-school. The formality and embarrassment of an introduction are saved. The object of the visit is too obvious to need explanation, and a welcome is given before it is asked. In the higher spheres of its influence, the Sunday-school is competent to call into full play the social sympathies of the young, and to provide means for warning the unwary, rescuing the tempted, encouraging the timid, and strengthening and confirming the well-disposed. The organization of other and supplementary schemes for these purposes becomes necessary, not because of the weakness or inadequacy of the Sunday-school system, but because its legitimate power is not exerted.

Not long ago, it was stated in the public journals that five hundred young men were wanted to fill eligible clerkships in mercantile houses in New York; and though many thousands applied for situations, the vacancies remained, because confidence could not be reposed in the qualifications of the applicants. The prevailing weakness and laxity of moral principle, the tendency to extravagant and reckless habits, the impatience of control and the indifference to character, prompt employers to be cautious whom they admit to their confidence. We may suppose that most of

the young men who are candidates for such positions, at this time, have had the opportunity, within the last five or ten years, to avail themselves of whatever advantages the Sunday-school affords for infusing the elements of an elevated moral character. Can it be that some earnest, intelligent Christian gentleman has had them in charge for five or seven years, giving them the privilege of his instructions, counsels and prayers, inculcating upon their minds and hearts the controlling principles of New Testament morality, and faithfully admonishing them of the peculiar dangers which beset their path, and all to little or no purpose? Surely not. The stronger probability is that, for the most part, they were left to the casual influences of the ordinary routine of Sunday-school exercises, with little, if any, reference to their preparation for the battle of life.

The reflecting teacher will be perhaps disposed to inquire whether the Sunday-school offers such a post of usefulness as his capacity and attainments qualify him to occupy. It is, therefore, worth while to consider for a moment what is the use of Sunday-schools.

The maxim with which we set out in our present inquiries, and which we wish to have borne in mind in their prosecution, is, that nothing human is wise, or pure, or permanent, except as it is made so by the will and power of God. When we shall refer to the Sunday-school, or any of its workers or helpers, as accomplishing this or that, let it not be forgotten that at best they are no more than agents and instruments by means of which (however insignificant and imperfect in themselves) the Infinite One brings to pass his pur-

poses of grace and mercy towards the children of men. Teachers left to themselves are as the tool without the artificer, or the clay without the potter.

The grand purpose of the mission of Christ to our fallen world is to bring all men to repentance; and, as God is a God of order and not of confusion, we assume that in applying the means appointed for this end there should be system and method; that it should be prosecuted as a specific work; that we should make the most of every opportunity at the moment it occurs; seize the most favourable juncture for exerting the required influence, and retain every inch of vantage-ground with perseverance and with unceasing prayer for wisdom, faith and constancy. In the system of means by which men are to be brought to the knowledge of God and the gospel, the CHURCH holds the first place. Understanding by this term the whole body of the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, we regard the church as the instrument or organ by which the glad news of salvation shall be published to all nations.

It has two simple external offices, viz. preaching, and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper,—the former symbolizing the doctrine of regeneration, and the latter the doctrine of atonement by sacrifice. For the perpetuity of these offices, an organization is required; and for its order and efficiency, proper functionaries are needful. The inspired volume is pervaded with references to this organization and the relations and duties growing out of it. Of course, all schemes having for their end the propagation of divine truth and, as a result, the salvation of souls, must be prosecuted

in conjunction with, and in strict subordination to, this plan which Infinite wisdom has devised. The church and its duly-appointed ministry must always be recognised as having higher claims to confidence and respect than any scheme of human device. The true idea of CHRISTIAN EDUCATION embraces not only all the spiritual and moral relations and interests of the human family, but also the subordinate and endless range of those which are purely temporal and secular.

If we take our stand in the vicinity of any definite form of moral or physical evil, and carefully examine its character and consequences, it will be found invariably traceable to some violation of a law of our benevolent Creator; and any remedy for such evil or suffering, which has no reference to a reparation of that wrong done to the government of God, will be superficial and transient. We can give the hungry children of the inebriate bread, and it saves them from starvation; but they will be hungry again and need relief again if their enslaved father does not forsake his cups. We can minister to the necessity into which pride, extravagance and waste have plunged a once prosperous family; but the humility, industry and self-denial inculcated by the gospel are indispensable to their permanent relief and comfort. We may organize associations to accomplish specific purposes of benevolence, or to counteract supposed tendencies to social inequality and popular discontent; but they will but very partially accomplish the object. The evils men groan under are all the fruit of *transgression;* and the cure of them lies in *obedience.* The curse comes through sin; the blessing must come through repentance, faith and

pardon. In a word, the gospel, with its restraining, purifying and elevating power, must be brought into contact with the minds and hearts of men, women and children, from the least to the greatest and from the highest to the lowest.

We want plain rooms and earnest, self-denying workers to bring the poor and degraded masses together, in places where their poverty may not be shamed by the contrast with a gorgeous temple and wealthy worshippers. There they must be taught, in simple language, enforced by pertinent illustration, their duty to their fellow-men, to themselves, and, above all, to God. They must be taught cleanliness, temperance, self-respect, and the rudiments of Christianity, in a plain way which they can understand. This is no Utopian scheme which can be set aside as impracticable. It is a thing done, and to be done again,—and to be done on a large scale, too,—if the Gospel is to find a foothold among the thick ranks of living, acting, dying men and women in our land.

If we visit the dwellings wherein a great proportion of the coming generation are now lodged and fed, we shall find in very few of them the influences to which we attribute such sovereign virtue. In our rural districts there is humble piety, oftentimes, without intelligence or aptness to teach and guide. And there may be, in other instances, competent intelligence and skill, but a lack of life and energy and of vital godliness. But in the great majority of families may be found (especially in our cities and large towns) almost every conceivable obstacle to the predominance of domestic peace and virtue,—families in which neither intelligence nor piety have any voice in the training of infancy

and childhood. Wrangling, intemperance, poverty and its hideous train of ills, have full possession of the dwelling and of the hearts of its inmates; and every moral influence, and even the instinctive regard for outward decency, are oftentimes expelled. (Note I.)

Has the reader ever visited one of these abodes of poverty, wretchedness and seemingly hopeless degradation? Has he ever stood (for want of a safe or cleanly seat) and looked with his own eyes on the stark, staring reality of a poverty-stricken group of parents and children? If so, he must have been pained at heart by the perplexing question, What can be done wisely and efficiently for the relief of moral and physical evils like these? He would not think it judicious to intrust that thriftless, sluttish, degraded woman with money to clothe herself, her husband and her children. He would not think a supply of food well bestowed, with no place to store it but the little room in which all the family and all the furniture are, and where all the eating, lodging and sleeping are done. He would not risk a gift of clothes that a pawnbroker would soon receive in exchange for the means of greater suffering and severer want.

Alas! alas! how vain is every attempt to relieve any thing but urgent animal wants in such a condition of human beings! If radical and permanent good is to be done to them, it must be by a *change of disposition;* then a change of the habits, and, of course, of the character and outward circumstances, will naturally follow. Every scheme of philanthropy that looks in this direction must combine powerful *moral* motives and influences with any and every other means. Try these inferior means on the

father and mother, or on the older children, of such families,—the boys and girls who have passed into their teens,—and the futility of them will soon appear. Invite such parents to attend some church near at hand, and see how apologies and excuses come forth, like Egyptian locusts, and consume your arguments and expostulations. You find them all at once very sensitive as to the denomination with which the church is connected; or they have not suitable clothing; or they do not like to feel as if they were intruders; or the children need their care. Possibly they may be persuaded, by offers of clothing and other help, to attend church two or three times; but who needs to be told how little dependence can ordinarily be placed on such a fitful attention to the means of grace? We revisit the family with a discouraged heart, and find the same tokens of suffering, want and woe.

But now we fix our eyes more intently on the *little* children. There is something hopeful there. We may perhaps tempt them to come out from these pestilent influences and examples, and bring them under Christian oversight and instruction. It is worth trying. It is the most encouraging alternative that presents itself. Late as it is even for them, and unfavourable at best as are the circumstances under which we must contend for their rescue, they must still be regarded as the most deserving objects of our sympathy and the most promising subjects of ameliorating effort. But no ordinary means will meet the exigency. They must be adapted in kind, as well as in the mode of application, to the peculiar exigency. We have not only a work of our own *to do*, but we have the work of others to *undo*. Un-

Christian and anti-Christian education has been begun, and is far advanced before the better agency is applied. Habits are the single strands that make the cable—the twigs that make the fagot which we call *character*, and these take their form and bent from natural inclination and temperament. To know how early they acquire form and vigour, let one examine a new company of applicants for admission into such an institution as Girard College, or the children received, in any week of the year, at any House of Refuge. In many instances they seem to know no distinction between truth and falsehood. Profane and impure speech is familiar to their lips as household words. Submission to authority from any motive but fear is unknown to them. With personal habits that sink them almost to a level with the brutes, and with minds besotted and hearts already filled with evil purposes, what measure of patience, skill and perseverance must be required to bring them into a tractable disposition! To counteract the perverse tendencies of fallen nature, and encourage and strengthen every right desire and emotion that can be awakened, is the first stage in the process of Christian education, and falls within the almost exclusive province of the *mother*.

Most wise and beautiful is this arrangement of our gracious Creator. The little stranger-child brings into the world with him a moral nature alienated from the will and government of a holy God, and the earliest development of its depraved inclinations is to be noticed and met by the dearest and tenderest human friend it will ever know. The gentle smile of a mother is to be won by submission; while her loving voice and

tender hand are to administer reproof and correction to the first expression of disobedience. By these and the like happy influences the feet of confiding infancy are to be turned into the paths of wisdom and peace; the habits will take their inclination from the same benign control; the character will be these habits combined and illustrated in daily conduct; and, thus forewarned and fore-armed, before he is called to encounter the shock of temptation or to stem the tide of vicious influences that rises up on all sides of him, we may hope the best for him. Nay, more. If this early training has been pursued with due reference to the power and promises of God,—if with maternal affection have been combined the prayers and tears of maternal piety,—may we not confidently affirm that, though a thousand fall at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand, he shall be steadfast and immovable?

But, alas! where are such mothers? The children in the abodes of poverty, intemperance and vice, whose position we just now described, have not known them; and it is for them chiefly that we have to provide. An influence must be secured then as nearly akin as possible to that of a *Christian mother* and a *Christian home*, and it must be diffused through all the households of the poor, the ignorant, the vicious and the degraded. Whence is it to come? By what means is it to be diffused? Not by miracles. Not by Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. Not by mere worldly philanthropy. Not by any one order of men exclusively, nor by any one sect, communion, or association. But by the vigorous, generous, hearty co-operation of all who sympathize in the

object and end. Every sufferer by the bite of the fiery serpent in the camp of Israel had, *in his own case,* an authoritative commission to bid all that were falling and dying around him to look to the brazen image lifted up by Moses. No apostle needed a better warrant for proclaiming the sufficiency of Christ's power to heal, than the restored blind man who could say, "*One thing I know: that whereas I was blind, now I see.*"

The reply to the grave questions just now put is readily anticipated. There is no agency now employed, or within reach of benevolent Christian men, for the amelioration of the moral, social and religious condition of THE PEOPLE,—nothing which so completely supplies the want we have been considering, *as a good Sunday-school.* The sacred day is most auspicious to our purpose. There is no such claim on the time of children as to make parents or care-takers grudge it. There is no tax to complain of, no interference with private rights or liberties, no infringement of conscience. The place for assembling such schools is usually favourable to good impressions. The text-books and the whole course of exercises (when properly conducted) are fitted to awaken and fix the best emotions of which the human heart is susceptible. The personal influences which bear upon the pupil are altogether healthful and impressive. And growing out of the connection between teachers and pupils are some of the most effective and appropriate opportunities that could be coveted of reaching families and neighbourhoods, and supplying their most urgent wants in a most acceptable and economical manner.

In referring the chief benefit of Sunday-schools thus exclusively to those portions of the community in which the means of living and the advantages of education are supposed to be very limited, if not entirely wanting, we do not mean to disparage their usefulness to more favoured classes of society. If, however, this cheap and pliable agency for giving a general knowledge of the Scriptures to millions has been used to relax the efforts or weaken the obligation of Christian parents or pastors to look after the spiritual interests of the family or the flock, let the sin lie at the proper door. No greater reproach can be cast on a Christian community than to say of it that parents who are fully qualified to instruct their children in the principles of evangelical religion, delegate that most delicate and responsible office to any one else,—especially while those children who have no such domestic privileges within their reach are roaming the streets or prostituting the sacred day to idleness and vice.

In advocating the more vigorous and enlarged use of the Sunday-school as a Christian educator, we wish it to be distinctly understood that it is not as a *supplanting* but as a *supplementary* power. We are the more solicitous on this point forasmuch as many intelligent and kindly-disposed persons are ever and anon intimating, in the public prints and in ecclesiastical debates, that the Sunday-school has been the means of tempting parents to neglect the religious training of their children, under the belief that they were as well or better cared for in the Sunday-school. If we had such parents on our Sunday-school forms for a few Sundays, we should make the most of the opportunity to

instruct them in the first and (what we suppose to be) the innate, instinctive principles of parental duty. We cannot send their children home when they come to our schools. It would not become *us* to reprove them for committing to others functions which it should be their highest and most grateful privilege to discharge. We must organize our Sunday-schools from the materials that are offered; and if any come to our humble board who might or should fare better elsewhere, let those who send them, and not we who receive them, be held responsible. (Note II.)

§ 2. *What a Sunday-school should be to fill its place and answer its purpose.*

In discussing the power and adaptation of the Sunday-school as an instrument of elementary Christian education, the phrases we used were, "a *good Sunday-school*," and "*exercises properly conducted.*" These are not words of mere form. They indicate rare, but not unattainable, qualities; they represent a great, but not impracticable, achievement.

Perhaps in almost any group of teachers we should find various opinions as to what, in general, constitutes a good Sunday-school, and what method of conducting its exercises is most orderly and effective. But when specific principles come to be stated and applied, and questions of theory and speculation are brought to a practical decision, there would be a very general unanimity. It is not unlikely that many would allow that practices prevailing in the schools to which they are attached are objectionable, while they may see no way at present of correcting them. Some usages may be

harmless in themselves, but censurable in the extreme to which they are carried. And it is possible that some so overdo a single branch of the Sunday-school work as to weaken, if not destroy, other and even more important branches of it. It is of great interest to each one of us, as working men and women in the Sunday-school field, that we should rightly apprehend the nature and power of the machinery which we employ. However difficult it may be for an individual teacher to realize it, he or she is one of a host on whose movements depend interests far more precious than those which are measured by time. It is difficult for a soldier to realize how much depends on his *personal* courage and loyalty. He might say, "Not much depends on *you* or *me;*" but let all the *You's* and the *Me's* turn their backs on the enemy, and where would the army be? One coward or deserter attracts more notice than a regiment of brave and patriotic troops,—just because his *individual* character is revealed.

We profess to be *Christian Teachers.* Whether we are properly qualified for the duties of such a vocation, or not, and whether we faithfully employ such powers as we have, or not, each of us occupies the place of a teacher of the way of salvation to the guilty and condemned. Each of us serves as an ambassador from the King of kings to a group of the alienated and disloyal subjects of his government. Our commission, as we have said, is as explicit, as comprehensive and as authoritative as language can make it. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," was a command addressed, not exclusively to those who were afterwards distinguished as the apostles in contra-

distinction from the disciples. Others received the charge; and others were instrumental in propagating the truth quite as efficiently, and with signs and wonders quite as numerous and extraordinary, as those which attended the labours of the apostles. Not only is the authority conferred, but the duty is imposed on all who *hear* the invitation of the Saviour to repeat it:—"Let him that *heareth* say, Come." A well authenticated commission under the sign-manual of Saint Peter, dated on the day of Pentecost, could not enlarge or strengthen the authority and obligation of every one who hears the tidings of salvation to proclaim them to all others. Our duty and authority to become teachers of religion being established, and our position in the ranks of such teachers being sufficiently defined by the nature of the duties we have to discharge, it becomes us to look carefully at the responsibilities involved, and at the consequences of a negligent or unskilful execution of the functions of so sacred an office.

Labourers from a vast harvest-field on which we toil with various measures of success, we would fain examine our implements and our methods of husbandry, and, if possible, prepare ourselves for greater usefulness and larger returns for our toil in time to come. It is the glorious privilege of man, even in the ruins of his apostasy, that the true purpose and end of life are connected with immortality and eternity,—that the powers of the soul are capable of indefinite expansion and improvement, and that every act of obedience to the gospel of Christ, though it be but the humble offering of a cup of cold water to one of his disciples, will be remembered when the heavens have passed away and

the earth and the things that are therein shall have been burned up. It is with human souls of such exalted relations and destinies that we have to do as Sunday-school teachers. Have all of us duly considered the magnitude and preciousness of the interests committed to us? Do we now appreciate in any just degree the vast power of the agency with which we have connected ourselves to diffuse the knowledge of the gospel of the grace of God, and *to bring an entire generation under its benign and saving influence?*

There has been a time in the history of American Sunday-schools when a band of teachers (not *picked* men and women, but of average character and qualifications) thought it a privilege to leave their homes at eight o'clock in the morning, winter and summer,—with or without breakfast,—and diligently teach a class of children or youth from an hour and a half to two hours; then engage in public worship; in the interval of service look after some sick or absent pupil; return again to the school for an afternoon session, and give themselves to some teaching-service in the parlour or kitchen, or to a neighbourhood prayer-meeting, in the evening.

Hard work, you may well say; but far behind the example of the divine Teacher:—

"He was teaching all the day,
Where the throng of hearers met,
And at night retired to pray
On the Mount of Olivet.
All the labours we have shared,
Oh, how poor and little worth,
When with those of Christ compared
While he dwelt upon the earth!"

From the little enclosure in which this due diligence had been used, rich fruits were gathered in due time. Few (if any) seeds sown there failed to spring up and bear fruit abundantly; and many whose spiritual birthplace was there are now sowing the like incorruptible seed in other soils with the same exemplary diligence. A single teacher, with whose fidelity we were acquainted, left at his death a register of fifty-four lads, as his Bible-class pupils, every one of whom became a professed disciple of Christ, and six of whom are now preachers of the gospel.

Not only was there this abundance in labours and products, but there was a consistent and conscientious regard to the proprieties of the office. A female teacher connected with a school of which we had the superintendence never purchased an article of dress or a personal ornament without serious and full consideration of the effect which the use of it would be likely to have on her pupils; and very recently the superintendent of a Sunday-school assured us that he denied himself the gratification of a particular taste for metal buttons, from a fear that it might injuriously affect his influence on his Sunday-school boys.

It is a Scripture admonition that we should "show the former things, that we may consider them;" and if the review of the labours and successes of past times is fitted to stimulate us to more earnest efforts, the contemplation of present exigencies and opportunities is not less exciting. For these four things are incontrovertible:—

I. There never was a time when such an institution as the Sunday-school was more needful than it is now.

II. The way was never more completely open for the full measure of its influence to be exerted than it is now.

III. The means of making such an agency for diffusing Christian education all that its advocates can desire were never more ample and appropriate than now. And—

IV. There never were more reasonable grounds to anticipate their complete and uniform success.

Each of these propositions might profitably occupy a whole chapter; but we must be content with a simple statement of them. Assuming their truth, the inquiry instantly arises, What prevents so powerful an institution, so favourably situated and so obviously appropriate to the times, from a full developement of its power? We do not hesitate to reply, *The want of faith, of skill, of diligence, of constancy and devotion, in those who are called to administer it.* To justify this answer, let us frame a few simple interrogatories, not addressed to enthusiasts or ultraists on Sunday-school matters, but to the most cool-headed, prudent and moderate of all those who are at work with us.

What, in your judgment, ought the Sunday-school to do towards forming, in a pupil, an intelligent, consistent Christian character? What confidence may we safely place in the scriptural knowledge, the religious habits and impressions, and the reverence for truth, of those boys and girls who have passed one, two, or three years in an ordinary Sunday-school? Is it a just cause of surprise, or does it occasion disappointment, that any of them, or, at least, any considerable number of them, should forsake the religious habits and associations

formed in such a school, and become indifferent and careless, if not skeptical and scornful? How many would know, from the manners, tastes, employments and attachments of fifty children taken indiscriminately from a public school or park, who of them had been in Sunday-school and who had not? How many of the select classes of a select school could, intelligibly to themselves or others, state the ground, the evidence and the fruit of a Christian hope? How many would be able to discriminate between the saving truths of the gospel and the plausible dogmas of error and superstition? In what proportion of cases does our Sunday-school teaching issue in, at least, an external regard for the great truths and ordinances of Christianity?

A fair answer to these inquiries would present the true contrast between our schools *as they are* and our schools *as they might and should be.* But, lest some should think these claims exorbitant and our standard an ideal one, we will lower it.

How many of the children and youth who were in the Sunday-school on the last Lord's day could repeat, accurately and understandingly, the Ten Commandments, or either the second or the fourth? How many of them could repeat, word for word, the sixty-eight words of the Lord's Prayer? We do not ask how many would *say* they could, or whose teachers would "have no doubt" they could. These are very different questions.

How many can give an intelligible idea of the books taken from and returned to the library in the course of the year, or of any one of them? How many could repeat accurately any considerable number of the

hymns and texts of Holy Scripture with which their memories have been stored? How many could speak of the impressions of truth and the convictions of duty made on their minds by the teaching of the Sunday-school; of evil habits which their attendance there has enabled them to correct; or of emotions of love to God and their fellow-creatures which have been kindled in their hearts by the faithful exhibition of "the truth as it is in Jesus"?

These cannot be regarded as extravagant aims for an institution so long tried and so well approved by the most intelligent and discriminating minds in the country; and if it should be found (as we greatly fear it would be) that in a large proportion of cases the result would be discreditable and mortifying, might we not reasonably urge upon teachers to gird themselves anew to their work, and to seek importunately not only the guidance and blessing of God, but for such moral and intellectual preparation for their work as should render it more useful and efficient?

It is not enough to meet such a view as we have now taken with the general truism, that *some* good has been done, or with a vague reference to the insufficiency and imperfection of all human means. Duties are ours, results are with God; but, nevertheless, those *results* are essentially modified by the manner in which the *duties* are discharged. We can fancy two teachers of two classes of boys corresponding in age and capacity and intelligence, and in all outward circumstances equally susceptible of right impressions. The teachers are both engaged in active business through the week, and both plain, uneducated, self-trained men.

They both take a weekly newspaper and have equal opportunities to read it. They both bethink themselves of the peculiar associations which will be connected with the next Lord's day, (which we will suppose to be the last *Sabbath* and the *last day* of the year,) though perhaps with different impressions of their value,—one thinking, it may be, of the occasional sermon that is to be preached, or the presents that are to be distributed, or some other matter of periodical, transient interest; and the other, of the inestimable value of such an opportunity to impress upon the volatile minds of children the brevity and uncertainty of life at every stage of its progress.

The first comes to his class with a serious—possibly a grave—countenance, and, at the proper time, addresses to them such admonitions about death and eternity as would be suggested to any thoughtful mind upon the recurrence of this period; but they have been often addressed in similar style before. It is expected now as a matter of course.. There is a respectful but not very hopeful attention. And whose fault is it (the teacher may say) if truth, seasonable truth, solemn truth, fails to reach the heart? Perhaps it will not fail. God may see fit to work conviction of sin in the conscience of one of that impatient group, and use that ill-digested and commonplace exhortation to bring the soul to Christ.

The other teacher is found at his post, and, with a cheerful, grateful, sunny expression of countenance, draws his little congregation around him. Soon their heads are all packed together as it were in a continuous circle; and as we draw near we should almost think

there must be some curious object, animate or inanimate, on which their attention seems so closely riveted. He is describing to them a fortress, in which prisoners of State are confined, and where they are sometimes left to die. He pictures to their view a prisoner lodged in a dark and dreary cell of that gloomy prison, and seemingly doomed to death. He has his coarse food conveyed to him through a little wicket; and the only water he has to drink trickles, drop by drop, from a minute aperture in the wall. He is told that the supply is limited. Whether it is a cupful, a gallon, or a hogshead, he has no intimation. One thing he knows: that every drop he takes makes the quantity less! He had a draught yesterday, and he has one to-day; but whether he shall have one to-morrow he knows not. What he took yesterday, and what he has taken to-day, hastens the falling of the last drop; and when that is absorbed his cell becomes his tomb! With a simple turn of thought, which it requires neither learning nor eloquence to give, the excited and earnest minds of his boys are directed at once to the successive moments of passing time, and with gentle but solemn words he counsels them to redeem every one of them. Perhaps he remembers the inimitably simple language of the sacred hymn, and repeats it:—

"Our wasting lives grow shorter still
As months and days increase,
And every beating pulse we tell
Leaves but the number less.
Infinite joy or endless woe
Attends on every breath;
And yet how unconcern'd we go,
Upon the brink of death!

Great God! on what a slender thread
Hang everlasting things!"

What, think you, would be the comparative force and impressiveness of these two methods of inculcating the great lesson which the last hours of a year are well fitted to teach? No one can be in doubt. The first class of boys will, in all likelihood, disperse when school is out, and the new year will come to them, as the old one departed, with little consideration of the

"Infinite joy or endless woe
That hangs on every breath."

If we know any thing of the human mind, the last class will often call up to memory the frowning fortress, the lonely prisoner, the stinted supply of water, and the agonizing fear with which each successive drop would be received, lest peradventure it should be the last!

Now, if we could carry the elementary principle which this simple parallel illustrates into the various departments of Sunday-school effort, what does the reader think would be the effect on the general tone and character of the institution? Will any one doubt that it would produce a reanimation and infuse an active vigour into them, the absence of which is now so often felt and deplored? Would it not enable us to dispense with many equivocal, if not decidedly objectionable, modes now employed to secure and retain pupils in our schools? Would it not draw a new and unprecedented measure of parental and pastoral sympathy to our Sunday-school labours, and awaken interest in many lookers-on, who now regard our enterprise with no such cordial favour as it needs?

And what was the difference between the two classes that we just now saw leaving the Sunday-school? Simply this. One class was *exhorted;* the other was *taught.* One class were patient sufferers; the other, grateful learners. In the minds of one class, impressions were engraved as with a pen of iron on the rock; from the minds of the other, with the first breath they took in of the outward air, all serious impressions probably fled away.

And what was the difference between the teachers? Not in intellectual endowments, nor the gifts of speech, nor in the general desire to be useful, but simply this: the one, as he thought, read and observed, gathered and laid up a weekly store for the nourishment of his little flock. The other did no such thing. The one lived in the life of his class; and their wants, dangers and destinies were never long absent from his mind. The other seldom thought of them, except when he saw their faces and heard their voices. And as in water face answereth to face, so each class answered to its teacher. To the one, the features, voice, figure, every thing belonging to their teacher were as a part of themselves. To the other there was a Sunday apparition; but it was cold, unwelcome and mechanical, and when out of sight it was out of mind.

To teach is not only, nor chiefly, to impart knowledge to the ignorant, as water or wheat is turned out of a full vessel into an empty one. It is rather to bring a full vessel into contact with the empty one, that it may attract to itself what it craves and what is best fitted to its nature and capacity. And the art of the teacher is to stimulate that empty vessel to such action as shall

slowly, but surely and wisely, fill it. Hence it is clear that to bring two *empty* vessels together, though one may be larger than the other, is of little advantage to either. If we succeed in exciting a desire for knowledge and in prompting the pupil to use the means of obtaining it, the great point is gained. All whimsical modes of teaching should be carefully avoided. The Sunday-school is no place for air-bubbles. The intercourse between the minds of a teacher and his pupils should be like the confluence of two rivers flowing from opposite directions and quietly mingling their waters. We have known teachers whose intellectual intercourse with their pupils was rather like the coming in, with a rush, of a roaring, tumbling waterfall upon an obscure brook, that suffers the overflow but is itself lost. It is obvious that the art of teaching skilfully is not a mean acquirement. It enlarges the sphere of one's usefulness—and especially of one's Christian usefulness—indefinitely. The teacher is moulding and fashioning the individual character, and, of course, the character of society. To attempt to teach without due preparation, is as if the blind should lead the blind; and of the consequences of this the divine teacher has apprized us.

If good teaching is thus pre-eminently needful to make the Sunday-school an efficient Christian educator, whatever aids or inducements we can apply to the acquisition of the art should be encouraged. A good teacher is often disheartened and greatly hindered by the lax discipline of the school, or by an imperfect and slovenly administration of its affairs. Of course, the skilful and efficient superintendence, and the due order and regularity of all subordinate details

respecting the library, the record-books, the methods of instruction, of visitation, of relief to the poor, plans of extension and aggression, and the whole adjustment of the machinery, enter largely and vitally into the efficiency and usefulness of the Sunday-school as an agent of Christian education; and to these the most careful study should be given.

If the views we have taken are warranted, we are conducted to the following conclusions.

I. That *Christian Education* is a work committed to Christians; and that all who have received the gift themselves are bound to impart it to the destitute.

II. That as an agency for infusing into all grades and orders of society the elements of religious and moral truth, the Sunday-school has pre-eminent advantages. No instrumentality yet known among men adapts itself so readily to all places and circumstances, can be employed so universally, or accomplish such vast results at such a comparatively insignificant expense.* All this is claimed in no spirit of pride or vain boasting, or in disparagement of other means of evangelizing the multitude, but to the glory of Him with whom the wisdom of the world is foolishness, and who chooses weak things to confound the mighty.

III. That, to give the Sunday-school system the position which it deserves as a reforming and educating power, superintendents, teachers, and others intrusted

* "In my judgment the *élite* of beneficent, and therefore happy, Christians in America is in the Sunday-school ranks; and as a means of bringing out the latent and diversified talents of a congregation, the Sunday-school is at present above all others."—Rev. J. W. Alexander.

with its administration must make progressive improvement in methods of discipline and instruction, in order that its influence may be commensurate with the increasing wants of the times. And—

IV. That to this end correct and comprehensive views of the principles and modes of conducting such schools are important, especially to those who have had but brief experience in the work.

Happy the man or woman who, in the spirit of the great Teacher sent from God, and in reliance upon his promised blessing, is instrumental in sending the first ray of light into a dark mind, and awakening the first throb of gratitude and love in some heart before a stranger to such happy emotions! It is an angel's errand intrusted to a redeemed sinner.

CHAPTER II.

THE MUTUAL RELATIONS OF PARENTS AND SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHERS.

§ 1. *The influence of the School upon the Parents.*

THE relations between Sunday-school teachers and the parents of the children they instruct are of very grave importance. Their intercourse is likely to be frequent and intimate, their anxieties and interests are closely identified, their sympathies are naturally deeper, and their mutual dependence more direct and obvious.

We need not be reminded that the parental relation takes precedence, and is the foundation, of all other human relations. It was instituted by our Creator himself, and is invested with responsibilities of a peculiarly interesting and momentous character. The Scriptures are filled with instructions touching the proper discharge of the duties of this relation.

Under the ancient dispensation, and before the introduction of the Levitical priesthood, the father of a family was invested with regal and priestly authority. And in the case of Abraham the supremacy and duty of the parental relation is thus beautifully recognised in the testimony of Jehovah:—"I know him, that he will *command* his children and his household after him,

and they *shall* keep the way of the law, to do justice and judgment," &c. And so in the remarkable instance of the sons of Jonadab, their obedience to the injunctions of their parent was the procuring cause of the permanent prosperity and protection of their house from generation to generation.

We have said that the parental relation is at the root of all other human relations. The authority of parents over their children, being derived immediately from God, cannot be delegated except in cases where his providence renders it necessary. The introduction of other social relations does not destroy or impair this. Political and ecclesiastical governments have no power to annul or limit it. The right to command is complete in the parent; and it is indefeasible, except by the act of God. The duty of obedience is simple and imperative upon the child, and sanctioned by fearful penalties. "The eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

Such a relation as this must be of inconceivable moment; and to avail themselves of its advantages is a point of deep interest to us as Sunday-school teachers. The teacher, for the time-being, occupies the place of the parent, and our authority is, during this period, coincident. The obligations incurred by the teacher at the time of receiving the child embrace all the duties of a parent so far as *discipline, care and instruction* are concerned. The reason for transferring these duties *at all* is that the parents do not regard themselves as so competent to discharge them as the teacher is, or that the advantages of an organized school or

class are superior to those that are enjoyed at home. To suffer children who come into our hands under such circumstances to become rude, insubordinate or indecorous in their conduct, to waste their time, or to form evil associations or habits of irreverence and trifling, is grossly to abuse and pervert parental confidence.

Notwithstanding many points of coincidence, however, there is a wide difference in the influence and circumstances of the parties. Home is a very different place from the Sunday-school; brothers and sisters are very different from schoolmates; and a teacher is regarded in a very different light from a father or mother. The trials of temper, the restraints and crosses, the disappointments and mortifications, the self-denials and irritations, of home, are comparatively unknown at the Sunday-school. The class does not afford such incessant temptations and opportunities for the display of selfishness, envy, and a score of kindred evil passions which are called out in the occupations and recreations of home. And it is a very different thing to be under the supervision of a kind teacher, two or three hours once a week, in one's Sunday clothes and with a hundred eyes upon us, from being subject to the watchful discipline of a parent through the whole round of domestic duties and proprieties—day in and day out—from infancy to early manhood.

If these things are so, it would be but a waste of time to show how much more can be done for children by judicious training at home than by the happiest endeavours of Sunday-school teachers.

The Sunday-school, therefore, though the best sub-

stitute which has ever been devised for parental instruction and oversight, is comparatively a very inferior system. The former is divine; the latter is human. And it is on this we found a weighty argument in favour of securing as much as possible of parental influence and co-operation. In other words, *it is our interest, as teachers, carefully to avail ourselves of whatever influence of this kind may be found in the homes of our pupils.*

To do this, it is of cardinal importance that we secure the confidence of parents in our *motives*, our *competency*, our *fidelity*, and in the *valuable results of our labours*. A word concerning each of these in their order. (1.) Many parents judge of the *motives* of teachers by the punctuality and constancy with which they fulfil their duty. If they find a teacher is always at his post in season, never leaving his pupils to follow the devices of their own hearts, because he is not with them to check and guide their wayward thoughts,—if they find him faithful to his engagements with their children, and that he perseveres in this course in spite of ordinary obstacles and discouragements, and that he does all this without ostentation or parade,—they will naturally ask, what motives but those of benevolence can govern him? If, on the contrary, they hear, through their children or otherwise, that he is often behind his time, while they are left to indulge all their mischievous inclinations,—that he forgets his promise to visit them, or to furnish them with some particular book, or that he is disheartened by trivial obstacles and subject to alternate fits of zeal and indifference, or that he is extravagant in his pretensions but lacking in evidences

of interest,—they will be quite inclined (perhaps unjustly) to ascribe his course to unworthy motives.

A plain but irreligious farmer expressed the conviction that "too many of these teachers attend the Sunday-school only for the sake of each others' acquaintance." He founded this opinion upon the evident disposition of some young persons of his acquaintance who were engaged as teachers, (and among them his own daughters,) to be often together for social intercourse; and hence his judgment of their motives was altogether unfavourable.

(2.) Most parents take it for granted that the Sunday-school teacher is *competent* to instruct their children from the mere circumstance that the duty is undertaken. And this opinion remains unless they have some positive evidence to the contrary. But if the child of an intelligent Christian parent comes home from Sunday-school under an entirely wrong impression of some important truth, evidently received from the teacher; and if such a thing occurs, not once or twice, but many times, it is not surprising that confidence in the teacher should be shaken; and if the suspicion of incompetency is confirmed at the time of the teacher's visit, or in other interviews with him, it would not be strange if the parent, under such circumstances, instead of co-operating with the teacher, should seek some other class or school for his child, or withdraw him altogether. On the contrary, it would be passing strange if he should not.

(3.) Respecting our *fidelity* there is little chance for parental mistakes. Children are accurate observers of consistency, and the records of our Sunday-schools

furnish some striking illustrations of it. If there is an habitual fervency of spirit, an earnest solemnity and sincerity of manner, without any assumed demureness or sanctimonious gravity, *children will be impressed by it*, and will disclose their impressions at home. It was said by one who, in the providence of God, was called to sit, as a teacher, in the very seat which his own teacher had formerly occupied, that, though that teacher had been in the grave many years, he never sat down in the place he had once filled, without a deep and vivid remembrance of the impressive, earnest and unfeigned solemnity of his whole deportment.

(4.) The instructions and admonitions, encouragements and appeals, which a faithful teacher administers to his class, cannot fail to produce some effect on their *minds*, if not on their *hearts and lives*. Few children can be under such a process of training, Sabbath after Sabbath, without showing some change in manners and conduct; and parents who perceive no such change in their children are very likely to have their confidence in the teacher or school sensibly impaired.

We will refer to a case. A superintendent who was accustomed to visit the children of the school, not only that he might the better discharge his own duty, but that he might the better judge with what fidelity the teachers of the school performed their's, called at the residence of four little girls, from six to ten years old, and conversed freely with the father, who was quite inclined to skepticism, but withal was a shrewd man. After a little while he expressed his sore disappointment that his children had been at Sunday-school so long with so little apparent benefit. He said they

were, to be sure, more anxious to go to church than they used to be; but he could see, too, that they loved to dress more than they used to do, and were more fond of gadding abroad. That he had hoped the Sunday-school would have mended their manners, but it had not; that when he told M—— to shut the door or to bring some wood, "instead of instantly obeying, as I suppose she is taught to do," said he, "she tells L—— to do it, and L—— tells J——; and perhaps, after all, I must shut it myself. I do not see that they are any more kind to each other, or that they have any stronger desire to serve and please me, than before they went to your Sunday-school."

All the arguments in the world could not secure the confidence of this father. He would scarcely be persuaded, though an angel should tell him, that the Sunday-school is a blessing to his girls, unless something more could be done by it for the obvious improvement of their character. He might well say, "Let them first show piety at home and requite their parents, and then I will admit that your school has done them good." Some parents may expect too much and may judge too hastily; but as we infer that a secular school is not well taught unless its pupils make some definite progress in knowledge, especially of the most elementary and important branches, so must we expect that the like judgment will be passed upon our Sunday-school or class if its members show no improvement in the knowledge and observance of the elementary duties of religion. It is a legitimate and reasonable inference; nor must teachers wonder that parental confidence is withheld, if, after due time, no evident and

valuable fruits result from the attendance of their children.

§ 2. *The influence of Parents on the Sunday-school.*

But there are duties of no ordinary gravity resting on parents; and teachers should endeavour, kindly and respectfully, to urge a diligent discharge of them.

1. In the first place, *they should, as far as possible, encourage their children to love and obey and try to please their Sunday-school teachers.*

This is a small recompense for the pains their teachers take in their behalf; and the more these feelings of respect for them are cherished, the greater is the good which is likely to attend their efforts in the school-room. For example, children may be often advised to ask their teacher's opinion when a question arises about which there is some doubt, or when a duty is suggested which is not very cheerfully assumed. The parents, though well settled in their own minds, may safely propose to refer the subject to the teacher, at the same time giving them such general impressions of truth as shall guide their minds aright, and such as any judicious teacher would be very likely to confirm. If the parents are awake to their children's interests, as they should be, they will keep the question in mind, and, at a suitable time thereafter, ask them what the teacher said about it, and, if proper, commend his judgment.

And so also a frequent reference to the teacher's opinion, as of great value, by saying, "What would your teacher think or say if he knew you did this or that?" or, "Do you think you would say so and so if your teacher stood by to hear you?" or, "Shall I write

a note to your Sunday-school teacher, and tell him what you say or do?" These and the like methods would have a tendency to sustain and increase the influence of the teacher, inasmuch as it is taking for granted that his or her good opinion is very valuable and probably would be right. Whatever influence is thus accumulated in the hands of the teacher is liberally returned to the parents in the greater advantage under which their children are instructed.

2. *The assistance to be rendered to children in the study of their lessons, by parents who are competent to give it, is of great importance.* If it is only to hear them read or recite the passage of Scripture which forms the subject of the weekly lesson, or to hear them answer the questions in the catechism, or repeat the verses of the hymn which they have committed, it is worth something; and few parents are so situated that they cannot do even so much. They can also encourage the elder children to aid the younger, or can, at least, so arrange the domestic affairs of the family as to afford them a suitable opportunity to attend to their Sunday-school lessons by themselves. It is not always that parents are willing to take the trouble of reminding their children of their Sunday-school duties. Some, indeed, instead of setting apart a suitable time to be devoted to this purpose, are so inconsiderate—may I not say *so sinful?*—as to grudge even the few moments that are seized by a faithful child and appropriated to his Sunday lesson. The teacher who is willing to give time and thought to the subject, and to attend the school on the Sabbath to instruct the child in it, may reasonably complain if the parents not only neglect to remind him

of his duty or to aid him in it, but actually deny him the opportunity to attend to it at all.

3. *Parents are bound to enforce the constant attendance of their children upon a school which they have regularly entered.* In a well-organized school a new scholar is not registered as a permanent member until after a season of probation. If his attendance for that time is regular and his behaviour good, his name is then enrolled, together with his age, the time of his entering the school, the number of the class to which he is attached, the name of his teacher, the names and residence of his parents, and such other circumstances as it may be of interest to record. In the teacher's book, also, most of these entries are made, and he keeps a minute record of the facts in reference to the attendance, attainments, &c. of each member of his class. From this time the pupil becomes a subject of the watch, care and oversight of the officers of the school, and particularly of his teacher; and, in case of the teacher's occasional absence, provision is, or should be, made for the supply of his place, so that the child shall not be at any time without proper care. Surely no considerate parent would needlessly frustrate all these arrangements by suffering his children to absent themselves whenever indolence or caprice might incline them to do so, or whenever a slight inconvenience would be occasioned to the family by their attendance.

It is believed that many families are disposed to be more sluggish on the Sabbath than on any other morning of the week. This indulgence delays breakfast; and thus all the employments of that "day of days" are thrown behindhand. Among other consequences,

the children are not ready for Sunday-school, and the parents, making a virtue of the necessity which their own indolence has occasioned, conclude, on the whole, that it is impossible for them to be in season for the morning school, so they will try to send them in the afternoon. Whether it is better to send them late than not to send them at all, we do not say. But, if our view of the relation of parents and teachers is not altogether erroneous, this is inexcusable negligence. Were a prince to be passing through their neighbourhood, and were it among his objects to confer titles of nobility and vast estates on three or four children whom he should select from the crowd that might assemble, without distinction of birth or fortune, so that a poor beggar-boy was as likely as his rich neighbour to be raised to affluence and princely rank, would not most parents, and especially the poor, be up betimes, and give all diligence to prepare their children in season, and have them among the very first at the place of meeting, that they might be *nearest* to the bestower of such munificent gifts? If such parents had just views of the subject, they would reason and act in like manner every Sabbath. They would say, "There is a place where Wisdom utters her voice to-day, and where my children may seek and find treasures of heavenly and divine knowledge. If they receive and obey the truth, they will soon be made kings and priests unto God and reign for ever and ever. Let us hasten to put their feet in the place of instruction, that they may become wise unto eternal life." A single session of the Sunday-school missed would be regarded by such a parent as an irretrievable loss.

4. *Not only should parents see to it that their children attend every session of the school, but they should train them to habits of exact punctuality.* It is as easy, in most cases, to be a minute before the time as to be a minute after it. In ninety-nine out of one hundred of the cases of dilatoriness, the delinquent party will himself acknowledge that it might have been easily avoided. The truth on this subject appears very clearly in the habits of travellers. If it is known that a steamboat or railway-train leaves the wharf or the station precisely at six o'clock and never varies a minute for any cause, persons will very rarely be left except in cases of accident or variation of timepieces. But, if the time of starting is indefinite, it will be quite a usual occurrence for persons to miss their opportunity. The habit of being true to a moment can be easily formed in childhood, and will save time, money, patience, (our own and others',) and many precious opportunities of doing and getting good. Perhaps the want of punctuality in teachers may be pleaded as some excuse for the like fault in children. In a well-ordered school the hour of opening is observed with rigid exactness; and this, of itself, is a powerful incentive to punctuality. A dilatory teacher, in most cases, may be brought up to his duty by proper measures; and a punctual teacher scarcely ever fails to have a punctual class, unless by his own consent. Parents should consider that a few minutes' delay (which a *little trouble* on their part might have prevented) occasions *great trouble* to others. A child coming into school after the exercises have begun disturbs the whole assembly, diverts the attention of all,

and, for a moment, interrupts all. In his own class the evil of late attendance is much aggravated. The teacher has, perhaps, with considerable pains, prepared the way for entering profitably upon the lesson by a series of preliminary inquiries and explanations, which are important to its intelligibility and interest. All these the dilatory child misses. To him, therefore, the residue of the exercise must be much less profitable; and, unless the teacher goes through a double duty to atone for the parent's neglect, there is no remedy. Unless this is done, the teacher feels the burden of having at least one in his little circle to whom his labour is likely to be in a great measure useless. And thus the whole effect of the tardiness of one child upon that class and school is a hundredfold more inconvenient to them, than all that would have been required of the parents to insure his seasonable attendance. If he is sent from home in season and loiters on the way, it may be as much the fault of the teacher as of the parents that he is not in good time.

5. In respect to the *appearance and apparel of a Sunday-school child* parents have an important duty. Cleanliness of person is all-but indispensable to improvement. There is a sense of degradation in the consciousness of being dirty. While water is so abundant, clean persons and clean clothes are blessings attainable by all. The coarsest and most unbefitting garments, though old and patched, are always passable if they are only clean and sweet. And some parents have little idea, perhaps, how much more a child is thought of and respected who is clean and tidily dressed, and comes to school with combed hair and trimmed nails,

with a white collar, shoes tied, and a pocket-handkerchief, though never so cheap and small. We are not to reject, but joyfully to receive, the most squalid and filthy outcasts of poverty and shame. Such are, in a peculiar and emphatic sense, the appropriate objects of our care and training; but it should be remembered that *one* of our objects in rescuing them from their moral orphanage is to bring them into the very state we have described; and the thousands of such children who have been drawn from the abodes of ignorance and sin by means of Sunday-schools have passed through that self-same process of cleansing and caretaking for which we plead. Their associations with gutters and pigs and heaps of offal must be first broken up, and they must be made to feel their relation to civilized humanity, before any moral influence will effectually reach them.

6. *Parents should uphold the Sunday-school teacher in the rigid enforcement of discipline.*

The absence or defect of parental discipline is a sad characteristic of our times, and portends untold calamities to the best interests of our country. For this reason, Sunday and daily school teachers, who occupy the place of parents, should be the more careful to maintain it. The discipline of most schools is merely moral; and the teacher who can rule his own spirit generally contrives to secure the respect and obedience of his class without resorting to any agency more powerful than remonstrance or entreaty. But there is a firm, steady, restraining hand to be held upon children, and especially upon boys from eight to sixteen years of age, which shall insure at all times

implicit and unqualified submission to the rules of good order and proper behaviour. This is not only consistent with the ends of Sunday-school teaching, *but indispensable to its proper effect.* It is painful to see the license which is given to the impertinence, frivolity and self-will of children,—especially of boys; and we know that parents would severely chide, if not punish, their children for misconduct which the teacher overlooks or passes without rebuke. If, in the midst of all the tendency to insubordination which exists in our country, teachers are found willing to enforce a wholesome discipline, the least they can expect in return is prompt and efficient support from parents. And parents should take special pains to acknowledge their obligations to the teachers for such favours in presence of their children.

So far from this, parents listen too willingly to the complaints of their children, and inconsiderately indulge them in their wish to discontinue their attendance on the Sunday-school, or, at least, to join some other school. By so doing, they sow seeds of sorrow and suffering, of which both parents and children will sooner or later reap an unwelcome harvest. If what has been said of the obligations of parents to teachers is true, nothing can be more inconsistent with these obligations than to trifle with the teacher's authority and influence. They should be habitually respected.

7. *It is the duty as well as the interest of parents to keep their children at Sunday-school to the latest period of their control over them.* The wisest man that ever lived, died ignorant of many more things than he knew. The study of the Scriptures is the study of the

character and will of God, and this study will be the ceaseless, eternal occupation of the redeemed in heaven. Every well-organized school makes provision for pupils at the various stages of their advancement, so that nothing mortifying or degrading need be associated with a continuance at Sunday-school long after the period of childhood has passed away. The Bible (or adult) class introduces the pupil to a more comprehensive field of inquiry; and any parent who understands the true interest of his children will look forward with anxiety to the time when they may become, in their turn, teachers of others. We cannot but think that if teachers were more careful to retain their hold upon the affections and respect of their scholars, and to impress upon parents the value of higher grades of instruction, cases of early declension of interest and final withdrawal from the school would be much more rare. With the views which are entertained on this subject by reflecting men, and with the accumulated evidence of the benefits of a prolonged connection with a Sunday-school, we earnestly commend to parents and teachers to unite their efforts and counsels for the exertion of all proper influence to accomplish this object; for to retain such a connection, either as scholars or teachers, while the providence of God shall favour them with the opportunity, will be conducive to their highest interests for time and eternity.

8. Another important duty incumbent on parents is, to *favour their children in the cultivation of religious habits, and especially habits of meditation and private devotion.* If we think of the miserable abodes from which some of our most interesting pupils come, we

should almost inquire where they had room even to stand or kneel, to say nothing of the opportunity to be alone. But they are not all thus forlornly situated; and even these may, perhaps, find means of accomplishing their purpose when their heart is fully set in them to seek God. An authentic statement is given of a pastor in New England who was called to visit a public school; and when the writing-books were presented to him for examination, he found in one of them a request, signed by a little girl, in behalf of herself and ten of her playmates, that they might have an interest in his prayers. Upon investigation, he ascertained that this little company of inquirers for the way of salvation had *actually worn a path to a secluded spot in a neighbouring grove, whither they were accustomed to retire for prayer.*

It depends much on parents, however, whether the inclination to religious thought and feeling which may have begun at the Sunday-school or in the house of worship shall be encouraged or stifled. Our Father in heaven, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, assures us that "he will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax." His compassion and tenderness should teach us to treat with the utmost gentleness and delicacy the germ of spiritual life. It is a moment of intense interest and indescribable importance, when a condemned sinner, and especially one who is in the morning of life, first breathes the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" Like the critical stages of a violent disease, the doing, or the omission to do, a very little thing at the moment, may decide the question of life and death. At such a crisis

a watchful parent (whatever may be his views of his own religious duty) will discreetly and tenderly favour the obvious current of the child's feelings, and, *without seeming to do it*, will actually arrange the circumstances of domestic service so as to make it easy and natural to indulge such feelings to a reasonable extent. Christian parents may be assured that a teacher sometimes parts with a pupil in such a state of mind with great anxiety and reluctance, and his chief hope under God is, that nothing will be done *at his home* to divert and disturb his mind, even though nothing is done to direct and enlighten it. Happy is it for all concerned when parents and teachers fully sympathize in efforts and solicitude for the child's welfare at such an important crisis.

We might advert to the duty of parents to see that the library-books loaned to their children are carefully used, diligently read and punctually returned. (Note III.) We might speak of their obligation, when they have the ability, to contribute their share towards the expense of maintaining the Sunday-school, recruiting the library, clothing the poor, &c. &c. All this would necessarily give them a deeper interest in the continuance and success of the school. There is also the duty of visiting the school at suitable intervals, to show that they do not regard it merely as a place where their children are kept out of harm's way, but as a nursery of their fondest hopes and highest parental expectations.

Unless it is the parent's fault, the visit of an intelligent, judicious Christian to his house, in the capacity of the teacher of his children, may be made instru-

mental of great good to his whole family. The character he sustains towards the children, the concern he professes to feel in their behalf, and the evident disinterestedness of his labours, all combine to introduce him to the household under the happiest auspices. He should ever be received with unfeigned cordiality and kindness, and every facility should be afforded to make his visit a season of interest and improvement.

In this brief view of the general relations of the parents and teachers of Sunday-school children, we have had continually in mind the final meeting of the parties in the great day of retribution. As soon as the child becomes the subject of God's moral government, two influences of opposite character begin to bear upon him. A contest commences between the powers of light and darkness, heaven and hell, to gain the dominion over his soul. Parents have the earliest oversight of his expanding powers; and when their children become members of the Sunday-school, parents and teachers become jointly, though unequally, interested in the progress and termination of the momentous struggle.

There is in our Sunday-school history the sketch of a touching scene which once occurred by the bedside of a dying child, in which this mutual responsibility was presented with overwhelming interest. We give it in the words of one who witnessed it.

"We have suddenly lost a most amiable, most faithful pupil,—indeed, the brightest ornament of the school. Our little Harriet was with us the last Sabbath morning in health, in high spirits, and with the fairest prospects of long life. Tuesday morning we

were sent for, to witness her last conflict with sin and death. God was merciful in giving her an easy passage from this into the eternal world, and, without a struggle or a groan, she sweetly fell asleep: could I add, *in Jesus*, my heart would be at rest. This is a distressing uncertainty; but it is a subject for rejoicing that she is in the hands of a just and holy God, who will do all things right.

"I have not words to describe the agonized manner in which her widowed mother, bending over the lifeless remains of her child, with upturned eyes and clasped hands, exclaimed again and again, 'Is she happy? Is she happy?'

"To her teacher, who came in too late to be recognised by the dying child, calling her by name, she said, 'See there! Oh, have you been faithful to her soul? Have you warned of this? You know not how soon you must meet her in judgment.' Then, turning to me, with a look and tone I can never forget, she said, 'Oh, you who are teachers, are you faithful? Let the death of this dear child warn you to be faithful. Oh, be faithful!' She then told us she had hoped much from the Sabbath-school for her children, and prayed much for it.

"Harriet had committed to memory several thousand verses of Scripture and four hundred hymns, and had written down the heads of almost every sermon she had heard after the organization of the Sunday-school. She was always at school in time, was correct in her behaviour and a general favourite. One year before her death, her chosen friend and companion, who always sat beside her in the class, was called to give up

her account; and, what was very remarkable, these two were the only deaths that have occurred in the school since it was organized, and both these children were insensible of their danger, having lost their reason before any danger was apprehended! What a call to us to awake from our stupidity and prepare ourselves and our pupils for the sudden coming of the Son of Man!"

The parents and teachers of this child survived her, and had space to repent of any errors or negligences into which they had fallen. But in the day of final account no such opportunity will be found. When that fearful inquisition takes place, the obligations of all parties will be balanced with infinite and unalterable exactness.

Alas for him, whether parent or teacher, or both, to whom it shall be said in that day, *This child was taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I must require at your hands!*

CHAPTER III.

THE GENERAL DUTIES AND RELATIONS OF SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHERS.

§ 1. *The Duties.*

As teachers, we occupy a position among the servants of the church of Christ which cannot be contemplated by any thoughtful mind without peculiar emotions. It may be said, indeed, that *no* Christian can seriously consider the opportunities he enjoys to advance the interests of his Master's kingdom, even in the ordinary circumstances of life,—and that, too, without seeking them,—and not feel humbled and ashamed of his misimprovement of them. But to Sunday-school teachers these opportunities present themselves under circumstances of peculiar advantage.

A Samaritan on a journey from Jerusalem to Jericho may, once in his life, find a fellow-being who has fallen among thieves and been left for dead, and he may gladly embrace the opportunity to apply restoratives, and furnish a conveyance for him to some inn, and supply his need while there. But one who goes into a hospital, as a volunteer nurse, has a work and a responsibility of daily and hourly pressure. It is no casual, hap-hazard call for the exercise of skill and sympathy, but a steady, constant, urgent claim upon him, to resist or trifle with which is a monstrous delinquency. The Sunday-school teacher is voluntarily, and by his

solemn profession, an instructor and guide of others. He separates himself from the other departments of Christian benevolence, such as embrace the relief of temporal and physical suffering, and assumes the responsibility of guiding some six, eight, or ten young creatures to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Nay, not six, eight, or ten only, but a succession of classes of this number, before whom he is to go out and come in as God's ambassador.

As we have before intimated, in the infinitely perfect and beautiful arrangement of God's providence, the task of training souls for heaven is devolved, primarily, on those whose instinctive affection would constrain them to give all diligence to *that* as the great end and aim of their being. We see that same arrangement recognised in all the dispensations of grace which have followed the apostasy. The spectacle of a household trained in the fear of God, and bringing forth the fruits of filial obedience, reminds us of the age when the divine intercourse with saints on earth was mysteriously intimate and palpable. Like some fragment of ancient architecture which the exploring traveller discovers, it suggests forms of beauty and perfection which have become nearly obsolete, and presents a model which modern taste had better study and imitate than attempt to improve. If parental duties were fulfilled, Sunday-schools would be in a great measure superfluous. If intelligent, or even Christian, fathers and mothers were faithful to their obligations, the sphere of our Sunday-school labours would be very sensibly narrowed. The indifference of some, the incompetency of others, and the neglect of the great mass, to care at all for the reli-

gious and moral training of their children, combine to open that boundless field of labour which is most appropriately assigned to us as Sunday-school teachers.

1. They have not a moment to lose in beginning the work.

The very first interview a teacher has with his class, though it may be amidst all the confusion and noise of organizing a new school, should be used for dropping in the ear of each a word of salvation. It may be simply, "My dear child, fear the God that made you;" or, "I hope, Johnnie, you love the Saviour, who died for your sins;" or, "You will not forget that God will judge us at the last day for all the deeds done in the body." If peradventure that first meeting with a group of little children should be also the last, or if either of them should, for any cause, be separated from the teacher never to be so related again, let it not be said that they met and parted—that disciple of Christ and one of his "little ones"—without some word of truth which the Holy Spirit can use for saving purposes.

Many an angelic messenger has been despatched from the presence of God, as Gabriel was to Daniel and Zacharias, on a single errand, the delivery of which might have occupied but a moment or two of time. And what less than an angelic message does the true Sunday-school teacher bear to each of his pupils? And why should not the first and briefest moment suffice to announce it, however numerous, and perhaps more favourable, may be subsequent opportunities to illustrate and enforce it? To one whose mind is duly impressed with the consequences that are often suspended

upon a single "word spoken in season," it need scarcely be suggested that the first meeting of a teacher with his class is an event of no little interest. Instances have been known in which impressions made in that transient interview have favoured or embarrassed all succeeding efforts of the teacher to do his duty.

2. Teachers cannot afford the loss of a single opportunity to do their work.

Even if it were a matter of worldly business, a failure to meet an engagement would be discreditable. Opportunities to improve one's fortunes, though neglected to-day, may be retrieved hereafter. Occasional disregard to the courtesies of life may have a sufficient apology. But where one has assumed the office of a teacher and guide, and the sacred day of rest is assigned for the duty, and the parties to be guided and instructed are waiting at the appointed place, what but the direct and unmistakable interposition of the providence of God can excuse the sacrifice or abridgment of the opportunity? What visitor to a Sunday-school looks without painful emotions upon a class of boys or girls occupying their proper seat through the greater part, if not the whole, of a session, with no one to restrain their childish folly, or to present a thought of God and eternity for the momentary occupation of their minds? And when they leave the school-room, to enter the place of worship or return to their homes, how sad the thought that no one has cared for their souls, even in the place to which they have been invited for the very purpose of having their souls cared for! How a teacher can be needlessly absent, and think of such a scene as the probable consequence of his absence,

without a twinge of conscience, is one of the inexplicable instances of human inconsistency.

3. Teachers cannot afford to let their pupils slight or neglect a single opportunity for instruction.

It is not needful that the mischiefs of such an indulgence should be pointed out. Such is the nature of the human mind, especially of a child's mind, and *most* especially when moral or religious impressions are sought to be made, that a double loss is almost inevitable when the force is withdrawn. By the blessing of God on skilful, well-adapted and steady effort, the moral perceptions are elevated to take hold of things unseen and eternal, as a heavy burden is drawn with difficulty towards the summit of a steep hill. But the intermission of a single opportunity to enforce and strengthen these conceptions, and elevate them, if possible, a little higher, is never fully retrieved. The loaded wagon ascending an inclined plane, if allowed but a momentary advantage in the draft, will run back with frightful velocity. To the pupil who is absent but a single session there is a double loss. He loses the positive benefit of the instruction which the class receives, and he is exposed to the positive counter-influences of idleness or vacuity. There is also a loss to the class, either from the necessary occupation of the teacher's time in repairing the consequences of such an absence, or from the absentee's ignorance of topics in which the rest are instructed but he is not. Besides these direct injuries from a single absence, there is the danger of his encountering temptations and snares that may be fatal to his soul's life. It needs no fancy to sketch the scenes of distress and sorrow which might well harrow up a sensitive

teacher's soul, and which have been not seldom consequent upon a single absence from the class. Sometimes it has been connected with the first step in the road to infamy and ruin, and not unfrequently with a sudden summons of the unprepared soul into the presence of God. Every consideration which should urge the unfailing attendance of teachers has its counterpart to be applied to pupils.

4. It is expected of teachers that they will make the best of each opportunity while it lasts.

When it was customary, in all our city schools and in many country schools, to occupy *three hours* every Lord's day in the business of Sunday-school instruction, the first session was usually devoted to the elucidation of the lesson of the day, and the second session to such instruction and admonition as it suggested, together with any extraordinary exercises or duties of a more direct or personal character. It was then comparatively a rare thing to have the exercises of the school suspended for addresses; and much less time was occupied in the distribution of books and periodicals than now. Few of our city Sunday-schools occupy a full hour and a half for each session; and in the country the number of schools that confine the instruction of each Sabbath to less than an hour, including the distribution of books and papers and the frequent interruptions by speeches or miscellaneous talking, is much greater than the number of those which exceed an hour. In many schools the actual working-time is less than three-fourths of an hour, or thirty-nine hours for the whole year!

When teachers are urged to make the most of each opportunity as it is presented, they will readily call to

mind not only moments which are needlessly wasted in the progress of the session, but larger fragments of time lost by late attendance of themselves or their pupils,—the latter evil being almost the invariable consequence of the former. How trifling is the worldly consideration that prompts men to punctuality! If any personal or pecuniary advantage will be put in jeopardy by dilatoriness, how nimble-footed a man becomes! But what leaden steps does he drag after him when nothing but his Master's service or the salvation of a soul invites him to effort! A right apprehension of duty would constrain every teacher, whatever else he might neglect or forego, to be in his place and ready for duty the moment the call to duty is heard.

5. Closely connected with the obligation to make the most of the time allotted to the actual work of teaching, is the duty of qualifying himself to do the most work in the shortest time. To take a familiar example:

The school has been punctually opened, the preliminary exercises are over, and the teacher addresses himself to the little circle before him. If he now for the first time learns what the subject of the lesson is, it is obvious that a few moments are required to cast his eye over it. Of this time the class is robbed. It is their's by virtue of the mutual obligations they have assumed. If, from neglect of preparation, he asks inappropriate or irrelevant questions, or makes mistaken references, or consumes time in looking up answers in order to judge of the correctness of those given by the class,—in all these and other similar points, the duty to which we refer is palpably neglected; and if the class notices, as one or more in most classes will, the unprepared state

of the teacher's mind, it would so detract from their respect for him and so diminish his influence over them that his services would be little more than nominal. But the position we take comprehends much more than all this. *The teacher should leave nothing to be done, in the presence of the class, except those things to the doing of which the presence of the class is indispensable.*

When one of our distinguished generals was ordered to invade the Mexican empire, there were those in high places who severely censured him for his delay to commence the campaign. These censures finally became so loud and severe that the general addressed a letter to the proper department, explaining the reasons of the delay. In the course of his letter, he described with much minuteness the various points to which attention must be directed in preparing for the invasion of a distant country, and showed that the power of a great general lies quite as much in preparing an army for service as in leading an army into service. The face of the country, the climate and productions, being all so different from our own, questions arise how the army is to be provisioned and their horses fed, what vehicles will be needed for transporting the equipage, arms, &c., what access there will be to water, what rivers are to be crossed and how, what clothing will the climate and changes of season require, and how may supplies and succours be obtained from home. These only indicate the character of a long catalogue of items which the foresight of an experienced commander suggested in prospect of a long and distant campaign. He left nothing to be done in the presence of the enemy except that to which the presence of an enemy was essential,—*fighting*. And

who can fail to see that the Sunday-school teacher wages a war against a more subtle foe, under circumstances of much greater difficulty and danger and for ends far more grand and glorious? And does *he* not need to survey the ground-work, the strong and the weak places, and settle the plan of assault? Has he no forethought to take respecting the time and manner of the onset, the temper and adaptation of his weapons, and his power to withstand the enemy? Is he so presumptuous as to trust to whatever allies or weapons may lie nearest to him at the moment of his need? So far from this, he should regard every weekly interview with his class as involving the destinies of eternity, and should prepare himself for it as if it were more than probable that on the use made of a single hour may depend the issues of an endless life. To do Sunday-school work in the shortest time and most effectually requires very careful and skilful preparation of mind and heart. And yet there are those who profess and call themselves Sunday-school teachers, who have not, in all their Sunday-school lives, expended as much time in preparing themselves to save souls as many a mountebank has spent in learning to poise himself upon a tight-rope or to balance a pole upon his chin!

6. There are incidental and auxiliary methods of increasing and extending the influence of a Sunday-school teacher, of which he is bound to avail himself.

His office is a passport to the confidence, respect and attention of all the families which are represented in his class. Each child is to him an open letter of introduction to the home-circle, which is seldom if ever refused. The connection which his official character

forms between him and the *homes* of the members of his class resembles the electric wire which connects the stations of a telegraph-line. Every motion of the teacher, *as a teacher*, awakens attention in the family; and no movement in the family, affecting the interests of his pupil, fails to excite the interest of the teacher.

The little boy who ran home and eagerly sought his mother, exclaiming, "*I saw teacher in the road, and he shook hands with me!*" unconsciously revealed the nature and power of such a tie.

Are there disturbing elements in the neighbourhood? It is not beyond the province of the teacher to attempt to remove or counteract them.

The opening of a fortune-teller's shop or of a lottery-office in the vicinity of a child's residence, or of any place that might present temptations to vice, would be an occurrence of which the teacher should take notice, and adapt a word of counsel more or less directly to the exposed party. But he would not be likely to know it unless, with his eyes open and in motion, he visited the child's home.

A Jewish clothes-dealer in one of our northwestern cities advertised his business by a flaming handbill stuck upon the corners of the streets and headed, "*Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy!*" and notifying the public of a new supply of goods and a reduction in price! A teacher, visiting in the neighbourhood on Saturday afternoon, saw the profane placard, and took advantage of it to instruct his class in the hardness of heart and unbelief which such a use of these sacred and wonderful words indicates, and to urge upon them the duty of honouring and obeying Him who is

despised and rejected by those whom he came to seek and save. The lesson had tenfold force from such an association.

Are poverty, disappointment and discouragement among the burdens of the family? It is his privilege to do what he can for their alleviation, and to prompt others to supply his lack of service. As a counsellor, friend and helper, the Sunday-school teacher can serve those who would be slow to seek, or even accept, service from a stranger. If he succeeds, by that courtesy and Christian simplicity which commend themselves to the poor and rude quite as readily as to the rich and refined, in winning the confidence of the pupil's family, his power over him for good is indefinitely enlarged. In domestic arrangements and vicissitudes, too, his sympathy will always be welcome, and, while others might be regarded as intrusive, his presence will never be unseasonable. If the family is about to remove, he naturally asks whether the neighbourhood and dwelling which they propose to enter will be as favourable to their comfort and moral improvement as that which they leave. If not, they may, on the kind teacher's suggestion, alter their purpose; or a little help in the way of rent, which some kind hand may proffer, will enable them to remain where they are. Thus, from being the moral guide and religious instructor of a single member of the family, and that perhaps the least important member, the Sunday-school teacher derives the right, or rather privilege, to sympathize with every family movement which involves the moral or religious welfare of any and every other member. It is obviously within the range of his duties to set before them the

importance and advantage of a regular attendance on family and public worship. He may properly advise them respecting the habits, associations and disposal of their children; and, as they are bound together in such a manner that no member can suffer without all the other members suffering with him, he cannot be indifferent to any of the influences that pervade the family circle. So that there is scarcely any limit to the benefits which a discreet and faithful Sunday-school teacher may confer on the families from which his pupils come, and they all fall within the range of his natural and legitimate agency.*

7. By the various means we have now suggested, and by others which refer more particularly to proceedings in the school-room, the Sunday-school teacher aims to secure a strong hold on the affections of his pupils. Indeed, it is in the school-room that his power is most efficiently seen, and it is the *power of Christian love.* It is the Spirit of Christ, reflected really, though imperfectly, by an humble disciple. The very gist and kernel of the Sunday-school work must be sought for within the little magic circle of which the teacher occupies the centre and his pupils the circumference. Here, grain by grain, is dropped into a mellow soil the incorruptible seed of the word. Here the prayer of faith is ejaculated with a fervour which only the consciousness of a present need can inspire, and the tear of

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*** The reader may have seen an account of a little girl who carried from Sunday-school a hymn—just one hymn—printed on a single page on purpose for distribution. The child afterwards died, and the parents had this hymn framed and hung upon the wall of their rude dwelling, as an invaluable memento!**

affectionate sympathy which often falls betokens the yearnings of the heart for the converting power of the Holy Spirit to be revealed!

If any Christian teacher is a stranger to exercises like these, let him faithfully scrutinize the motives which prompted him to engage in this service at all, and apply immediately and earnestly to the God of all grace for a just knowledge of himself and his duty.

There is no such thing as the sympathy or confidence *of a class.* The heart of each pupil knows its own attractions and aversions. One may love his teacher because of some kindness shown to his father; another, for helping him to get a good place; a third, for the faithfulness of his instructions; and a fourth, for his obvious goodness and love of truth and for the interest taken in his spiritual welfare. The emotions prompted by these various considerations will be as variously expressed; and the wise teacher will discriminate carefully and cherish studiously every such thread of influence that connects their mutual sympathies. These impulses of feeling indicate, also, the avenues by which access may be found to the pupil's heart; and those who know the difficulty of such access will appreciate their importance.

Each pupil, as we have said, is lost or won as *an individual.* The direct communication lies between the individual mind of the teacher and the individual mind of each of the six or eight boys that compose his class. A consideration that will weigh much with A. B. is entirely lost on C. D.; and what E. F, haughtily but ignorantly contradicts or denies, G. H. receives with a good and honest heart: so that the teacher has to divide

himself, we might say, into as many parts as he has pupils, and each part becomes a whole to each pupil.

One of the chief causes of an evil which has excited much attention, not to say animadversion,—viz., the large proportion of children who leave our Sunday-schools, as it is alleged, and do not connect themselves with the assemblies of God's people,—lies probably in the absence or failure of the effort to secure their *individual* confidence and affection. It is easy to see that if there is no heart, no warmth, no earnestness, in the relation, nothing that kindles the affections and answers the cravings of a child's nature, he will not sit many months on the Sunday-school form after an opportunity occurs to make a decent exit. And if during his connection with the school no distinct and definite attachment has been formed to the services and ordinances of religion, what wonder is it if he slips off at fourteen or fifteen, to enjoy the freedom for which his worldly and unsanctified heart has long sighed? Let the teacher see to it that none of the disastrous consequences of such an abrupt act are traceable to him.

8. No little care and ingenuity are needful to adapt the instruction of a Sunday-school class *to the gradual advancement of its members in age and knowledge.* The matter and method which might be very pertinent and useful the first season or the first year would be quite inappropriate the second. Exhortations and admonitions which were salutary and impressive in their season become flat and unprofitable by lapse of time. Very little children will hear a story repeated many times, and always with new delight; but only twice told tales are very nauseating to boys and girls who have

been for one, two, or three years under intelligent and faithful instruction. The apostle speaks of a time in the progress of Christian knowledge when the principles or elements of the doctrine of Christ are to be left, and the disciple is to go on to perfection. A robust schoolboy requires a different diet from the infant in the cradle; and no less requisite is it that the instruction of a class should be adapted to the progressive stages of its improvement. No doubt, teachers—and well-meaning teachers, too—are often deserted because they bring forth out of their treasure only things old, the very sight of which their pupils loathe.

It might have been rude, but it certainly was natural, for the Sunday-school boy whose teacher was about to repeat the parable of the fruitless fig-tree for the hundredth time, to exclaim, "Now, teacher, you a'n't going to cut down that 'ere fig-tree again!"

In the early days of Sunday-schools there might have been some apology for such grievous mistakes; but when the means of improvement and progress are so bountifully provided that no teacher need be without them, it is difficult to excuse a neglect or error that involves such irretrievable loss. It is possible that a mistake of a more general kind has been committed in not providing special teachers and special courses of instruction for such of the members of our Sunday-schools as have been long under care and have attained an age which entitles them to some such consideration. When the obligation of every teacher to adapt his instruction to the opening capacity and increasing knowledge of his pupils presses with undiminished force, to neglect it is to defeat the very end for which he labours.

We well remember a girls' class in the Sunday-school connected with the North Church in Hartford, Conn., from which no one thought of retiring until called to serve as a teacher in the same or some other school, or removed by the providence of God. The connection was regarded as *permanent* both by teacher and taught.

9. It is a peculiar feature of the Sunday-school teacher's office, that the ties it creates *are as enduring as life itself.* To enter upon it for a mere casual or temporary service is to trifle with it. The moment he takes his seat as a religious instructor,—as a messenger of the Lord of Hosts to a group of rational and immortal creatures,—the teacher must regard himself as consecrated to the work, and as justified in abandoning it only upon some clear intimation of divine providence. The consequences of relinquishing, for frivolous or insufficient reasons, one's post in a Sunday-school, may not be so marked or extensive in their influence, but they are equally important to himself as if it were the post of a professional minister of the gospel. To a reflecting mind, the relation of a Sunday-school teacher to his class loses its chief interest the moment it loses this character of *permanency.*

Their first interview is like that between a traveller upon some strait and narrow road found with difficulty and kept only by constant watchfulness, and some playful, giddy, thoughtless children who are wandering in the adjoining fields and likely to stray beyond recall into the dark wilderness or upon the bleak mountains, there to perish with hunger and exposure. Prompted by natural sympathy, he stops and invites them to come with him, that he may lead them to a

safe and happy home whither he is himself going. They look up for a moment, with a laugh equally expressive of surprise and pleasure, and perhaps tell him that they could not be happier anywhere than they are there. Does he leave them at once and pursue his own way, knowing as he does that this scene of beauty and gladness will change,—that a cloud will soon overshadow it,—and that, even while they are parleying, danger may be approaching? He becomes more earnest in his expostulations; he describes to them the nature and imminency of their peril, sets before them the safety he feels in his own course, and the desirableness of the company he finds and of the place to which he is journeying. But they see no danger, and are still disposed to make the most of the sports of the open field. And does he now give way to discouragement and forego all further effort for their safety? So for from it, the very exertion he has made in their behalf only stimulates him to new effort and inflames his zeal to accomplish their rescue. He feels in a measure as the God of Israel is represented as feeling when by the mouth of the prophet he exclaimed, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?"

At length one of them, with a thoughtful look, throws down his flowers, and, with all the resolution which a child can muster, comes up to him with an open, confiding expression, which says, "I will go with you, traveller!" Filled with joy and gratitude, he seizes his little hand and guides his feet into the safe path. And does he now go on his way and leave it for other travellers to invite the rest of the heedless group? No: he uses the simple eloquence of his new companion to

strengthen and enforce his own argument, and with this auxiliary he renews his expostulations and entreaties, and in due time has the happiness to have them all with him as fellow-travellers to the Jerusalem that is above! And will he now lose all interest in their progress? Will he not sympathize in the vicissitudes of their pilgrimage till he or they come to its happy close? There are those who could answer such questions with emotions that the tongue cannot utter. The bond which unites the true teacher to his class is not dissolved by change of time or place. With his hands, his eyes, his heart, his prayers, he follows them till he or they are lost to each other's vision in the dark valley.

10. And, to name but one other of the elements of Sunday-school strength, so far as the teacher is concerned, there must be a thorough inculcation, in season and out of season, of those doctrines of faith which involve the grounds of salvation. Here is the grace and glory of our whole machinery; and it is at this point we may well have the most painful misgivings.

It is obvious that in this, as in all other branches of education, the teacher must not only know more than the pupil, but the pupil must see and feel that he does, and that he is therefore a gainer by the connection. To make Scripture truth (which is emphatically the truth we have to teach) impressive, it must be intelligibly presented. And hence the teacher needs to have not only a thorough knowledge of the words and general sentiment of a lesson, but such a familiarity with its minute particulars and connections, and with the import of the idea which the inspired writer intends to

convey, that he shall be conscious of his advantage over the pupil in knowledge much more than in age or standing, and be qualified to infuse into his mind a portion of the interest which study and meditation have generated in his own. When the intellectual furniture is thus provided and set in order for use, and the heart is burdened with a desire to glorify Christ in the salvation of a group of children and youth, we may confidently expect results over which angels and the spirits of the just made perfect will rejoice.

In ancient times it was wont to be said of skilful archers, that, in going forth to battle, each of them carried in his quiver the lives of twelve of his enemies,—twelve arrows filling his quiver, and each of the arrows certain of its aim.

From the warriors of the world, with their carnal weapons and blood-stained garments, we may borrow the spirit of such a sentiment and apply it to those who are seeking to achieve the peaceful conquests of the cross. Would that of every Sunday-school teacher it could be said, as he bends his footsteps towards his class on each Lord's day, He carries in his heart and hand, by virtue of his faith and prayer and of the tidings of which he is the bearer, the souls of one or more of his pupils!

§ 2. *The Relations of a Teacher.*

Let us now look for a moment at the relations of the individual teacher to the work in hand.

Assuming that the laborious, self-denying and constant service which has been thus briefly delineated is no more than is justly expected of Sunday-school

teachers, let us fancy for a moment that it is faithfully and universally rendered. Let us imagine that we see over our land two or three hundred thousand respectable men and women, most of them in the vigour of life, intelligent, and earnestly bent on doing good; going forth on each returning Sabbath, not in a body, but individually, upon as many different errands of love and piety, to meet in their respective places of assembly some two or three millions of children and youth in little companies of six or eight. Conceive, for a moment, of forty or fifty thousand schools of religious culture opened Sabbath after Sabbath, in cities, in rural districts and in the sparse neighbourhoods of our new settlements, from each of which songs of praise ascend to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Prayers are breathed into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth for a blessing on the occupations in which they are about to engage; the precious truths of the gospel are recited, illustrated and enforced by those who have made them the subject of prayerful study; sweet hymns are fixed in the memory and uttered in song; affectionate counsels and earnest expostulations are mingled with the teaching; and to each family represented in each of these forty or fifty thousand schools is sent, by the hand of its children, a Testament, a hymn-book and one or more instructive volumes, as companions and counsellors through the ensuing week. Conceive, moreover, that, of these two or three hundred thousand teachers, many hundreds and thousands will be seen, before the next Sabbath returns, bending their steps towards the dwellings of their pupils, to inquire after them, and to use their Sunday-school

connections as a means of good to the whole family. A thousand friendly hints are given, from time to time, on subjects of moral and domestic economy; kind sympathies are fostered, and a sense of obligation awakened which gives new power to the teacher in all his relations to the school. Consider, also, that the gentle and benign influences exerted by these two or three hundred thousand persons are not restricted to the two or three millions of children and youth who compose the existing forty or fifty thousand schools. Every successive Sabbath, some are leaving and others entering, so that the sun and dew and gentle shower come upon them as upon the successive crops of the husbandman. And then, finally, imagine that this benevolent, we had almost said boundless, agency, stretches along over the joint lives of the teachers and the taught, so that down to the very chambers of death the relation is recognised with grateful and mutual gladness. And who is not filled with wonder and admiration at the simplicity of the institution and the grandeur of its design, capacity and results?

If we would test the correctness and safety of this comprehensive view of our great work, a method is at hand. As arithmeticians prove multiplication by division, so we can reduce our imposing aggregate to single units. And what individual teacher, who has been diligent in the Master's service, has been long without some token of his blessing? The survey of the vast multitude that compose our Sunday-school strength, imposing as it is, does not fill us with half the courage and animation which we derive from the answer of one little child—untaught save at the Sunday-school—

who, being asked why she expected to be happy when she died, said, "*Because, sir, I think I love Jesus.*" A soul saved is more than a world gained. What a glory would encircle our Sunday-school machinery if in every class now organized there were at least ONE who could truly say, "I think I love Jesus!"

It is with an institution of such commanding power that each Sunday-school teacher has connected himself; and to every one we have a right to look for a substantial contribution to its support, improvement and extension. He adds to its benign and healthful influence just so far as he is qualified for his work and disposed to do it; and, on the other hand, he weakens and embarrasses it just so far as he lacks such qualification and disposition.

We may mourn over the apathy of those who should be first and foremost in sustaining and extending our schools. We may be mortified at seeing the school-room transformed, as even churches sometimes are, into theatres of puerile and fantastic exhibitions, and we may deplore the lukewarmness, inconsistencies and incompetency of many who are enrolled among our teachers; but the Sunday-school must still stand acknowledged an unrivalled agency for training a generation in the knowledge of saving truth. Of the many imperfections and absolute defects in the system, none are more conscious than those who are most intimate with its operations and most laborious and faithful in conducting them. So far as such evils lie outside of the proper province of the teacher, time and a kind Providence will, we must hope, furnish a corrective. The heart of the church of the Redeemer will, we trust,

be reached, and the impression will erelong be made that her hope lies, humanly speaking, very much in the direction of well-taught Sunday-schools. Christians will be led not only to think and feel right on the subject, but to *act* right.

After all, however, the lever for elevating the vast interests of the institution is in the hands of TEACHERS; and hence the great problem is, how shall these leaders of the little bands of hope be endued with knowledge and zeal and aptitude, and so be qualified to make our Sunday-schools what they should be? It would take many pages to describe, even in the most general way, the various methods which have been suggested for the accomplishment of this most important object. But, whatever the *method* may be, it cannot be too often urged or too deeply impressed on the minds of teachers, that it must be *individually* applied. Each teacher has his own office to magnify. It has been well said that "the first and greatest thing a Sunday-school needs is *good teaching*. With good teaching we are sure to have good rooms, good schools and good fruits." Teaching is an art: anybody can discharge a musket, but it requires training to hit a mark. Some catch the art more readily than others. A few have a passion for it. All may attain to a sufficient knowledge of it to be very useful, but not without pains-taking. Among the first requisites to obtaining such knowledge are a consciousness of ignorance and a willingness to be taught. The most formidable hinderance to its attainment is an overweening estimate of one's self.

It is vain to expect that two or three hundred thousand teachers will be raised up all together by a myste-

rious power, so that on some bright Sunday morning the schools in San Francisco and Castine and all the way between will find themselves suddenly supplied with a corps of earnest, intelligent, warm-hearted men and women, such as were never seen there before. So far as the influence of example goes, one teacher may be the means of improving a whole school; but how efficient or permanent such an influence shall be, is determined by each individual for himself. (Note IV.) Our age and all our moral machinery tend too much to generalization. Personal duties and responsibilities are swallowed up in great schemes advocated by great orators in great public meetings. Our philanthropic schemes are largely and ingeniously discussed in our public journals,—and this is well in its place; but when some *Maria Cheeseman* is to be rescued from poverty, abuse and imminent peril, the sympathies of an individual must be awakened, the flesh and blood of some one man or woman must breast the sharp wind and pelting storm. There is labour to be endured patiently day after day and month after month; individual fidelity and perseverance are demanded up to the very moment of success; and in the end it will be said, not to the congregated mass, but to some Thomas Cranfield or Sarah Martin,—the individual man or woman,—"Well done, good and faithful servant!"

No anticipations of a marked improvement in our Sunday-schools or of any large expansion of their sphere so as to embrace the poor and miserable and abandoned,—without losing their hold on those who, though in better worldly circumstances, are alike living without God and without hope in the world,—will be

realized apart from the determination of each teacher to make the best of his time, his gifts and his opportunities *in this particular vocation.* The moment such a determination is formed and acted upon, there will be a bright green spot in the school to which that teacher belongs, which was not there before. There will be awakened in one of the classes of that school an interest and an eagerness of attention which was not felt before. And the superintendent of that school, if an observing man, will have a record made on his memory, if not on his minute-book, of a beam of sunshine which cheered the room for the first time on that day. The occupants of the adjoining forms, too, will not fail to notice a new phase of affairs in their neighbourhood. Though hidden deep in three measures of meal, even that little leaven will find its way upward and outward until the whole is leavened; and thus we will have a vigorous, healthful, well-disciplined and well-instructed Sunday-school, as the ultimate fruit of individual improvement.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL REGARDED AS THE MEANS TO AN END.

TAKING up an influential religious newspaper not long since, our eye was caught by an editorial article, from which we cite a passage or two :—

"Improvement is needed in Sabbath-schools in the *quality* of the instruction. The corps of teachers is often composed of the youngest members of the churches, with an imperfect knowledge of the great truths of the gospel and a limited experience of the essential elements of Christian character. They love the Saviour; they love his cause. They are inspired by an earnest zeal to labour in his service. They long to be useful in the salvation of sinners. Their activity and zeal are of great value, but these cannot supply the want of Christian knowledge and experience; and any thoughtful man who has overlooked the methods of instruction common to our best schools must have been sometimes troubled with doubts whether the children of Christian parents do not lose quite as much as they gain by attendance upon the Sabbath-school. The knowledge imparted is so superficial and desultory that they do not become good Bible-scholars, rooted and grounded in the great truths of the Bible.

"It is easy to discover such faults and imperfections,

but very difficult to correct them. There are members in most of our churches, rich in Christian experience, of large intelligence and knowledge of Scripture truths, but they are often deficient in the activity and zeal necessary to awaken interest in a Sabbath-school class. They make dull and lifeless teachers, and the actual results from their labours are no more satisfactory than from those of their less intelligent colleagues. Indeed, if compelled to choose between the two, we should prefer the zeal without knowledge, to knowledge without zeal, as far more likely to secure the salvation of the scholars."

Such opinions are not new. They are not confined to any particular denomination or locality. They are entertained by many who do not express them. It cannot be denied that instruction in our Sunday-schools is, and must needs be, to a considerable extent superficial and unreliable. The *time* employed in a large majority of schools is too brief to allow of systematic and thorough instruction. An hour, or even an hour and a half, a week, would give but an imperfect knowledge of any secular science. By far the larger portion of the children in the Sunday-schools of the United States have to be satisfied with three-quarters of an hour's teaching weekly. The immaturity of years and experience which we often find associated with the Sunday-school teacher's office, and the very scanty preparation which ordinarily suffices, (where any at all is deemed necessary,) would go far to account for the alleged defects; and we do not suppose the Sunday-school is expected to do much more, generally, than impart a knowledge of the leading facts of Scripture and of the

elementary principles of the Christian faith. Teachers can so far present to the minds of children and youth the simple, saving truths of Holy Scripture as to inspire the hope and confidence that, with the divine blessing, they may become wise unto salvation; or, at least, they can supply such a knowledge of the contents of the Bible as intelligent pupils in a secular school are expected to possess of geography, history, &c. Mrs. Barbauld, in her reply to Gilbert Wakefield, says, "Nothing that is taught at all is taught in so vague and desultory a manner as the doctrines of religion."

Were we asked to designate one of the chief causes of the failure of Sunday-school teaching in the respect to which the newspaper-writer refers, we should unhesitatingly say, the *vagueness or indefiniteness of the end or purpose which the teacher is supposed to have in view.*

To every wise measure there is a distinct purpose. Nothing in nature or providence is done or suffered but with a view to some specific end. Not one of the countless leaves of the flower-garden, the park or the forest falls till it has accomplished the precise end for which it was produced. As each of them floated down from its giddy height to the lap of its mother earth, it might have said to itself, "So my brief life ends. Faded and shrivelled as I am, the purpose of my being has been answered thus far; and I gladly yield my place in the air and sunshine, for a less conspicuous, but perhaps not less useful, position in the gutter or the barn-yard,—desiring nothing there or here but to accomplish the end of my ephemeral existence."

"The more clear and complete our conception of the

purpose, the better shall we execute the work. The end is a kind of archetype which exists in thought before the workman brings it into being. There are other conditions inherent in the matter which the workman is to fashion, and relative to the instruments he uses,—to his own strength,—to the circumstances which surround him,—to the interval of time which is granted to him. Put aside this idea of an end, or neglect some of the essential conditions, and there is nothing but confusion and ineffectual effort: motion and strength remain, but there is no more execution, and perhaps there will be ruin."*

In works of science and art, the *present* conception of some distinct purpose to be attained is indispensable as an incentive to industry and perseverance. Every stroke of the sculptor's chisel has respect to the finished statue elevated to its niche or pedestal; and not a touch does the painter give the canvas without a distinct conception of the completed picture and the crowd of admiring critics.

The machinist, in moulding and adjusting the ponderous parts of a locomotive, thinks of its appearance at the head of a heavy freight-train, screaming and thundering through the valleys and mountain-gorges of the Alleghanies or the Andes as if scorning time and distance. He never thinks of it as a shapeless wreck half buried in the sand-bank or hissing and smoking among shivered timbers and mangled human bodies. For no such disastrous end were the skill and labour of many men for many months expended upon

* De Gerando on Self-Education, translated by E. P. Peabody.—Burnham, Boston, p. 21.

it. So of the ship, the watch, and even the insignificant pin or needle. Each and all show in their very mould and structure the presence, in the mind of the artificer, of a definite purpose. Were we to inquire of Sunday-school teachers what end they have in view from week to week in the discharge of the various functions of their office, the general answer would probably be, The salvation of souls. But suppose we push the inquiry a little further, and ask of each individual whether this end is *present to his mind* in the successive stages of his work, in his closet, with his class, in his visits and in his daily meditations? Is it his habit to inquire how far this or that measure will contribute towards the grand result? What, in nine cases out of every ten, would be the reply?

These are questions not unworthy of consideration; but our present purpose is not so much to show the *importance* of having a distinct object in view, as to inquire *how* the matter and manner of our teaching are to be adapted to such an object when presented. And as a single illustration of our views will best serve to set the point clearly before the reader,—bearing in mind that the same reasoning is alike applicable and conclusive, let the subject be what it may,—we take the habit of PROFANE SWEARING.

In all civilized countries where the true God is known, this is an offence punishable by law. The statutes of most, if not all, the States of our Union, prohibit it under a penalty. The *enactment* of such laws indicates a consciousness on the part of the Legislature that reverence is due to the name of the Supreme Being; while the almost universal neglect to *enforce* them shows how lightly

the offence of irreverence is regarded. Indeed, it seems rather like contempt to impose a fine of one shilling for each profane and blasphemous invocation of that holy name! And, if we may credit our own ears, those who are constituted guardians of public morals and administrators of the laws are not without grievous sin in this matter. For that it is a grievous sin none of us can doubt, though we may have very inadequate conceptions of its enormity. All the authority of human law, in the family and in the community, is based on the authority of God. He occupies the throne of the universe. The hosts of heaven bow to his sceptre and veil their faces in his presence. To treat his name with levity implies contempt of his authority and, of course, of all other authority. Yet how few are startled by hearing a profane oath! If the name and authority of the Emperor of France or Austria were as contemptuously treated in the streets of Paris or Vienna as are the name and authority of Jehovah in the streets of any of our cities, the offenders would be summarily and severely punished. The habit of profane swearing is usually formed by imitation and thoughtlessness. Little children notice that when older boys would express a strong, or earnest, or, as they may think, a manly, feeling, they use an oath. They scarcely know the meaning of the words when they first use them. Older boys become more and more addicted to the habit, and gradually enlarge their profane vocabulary, from hearing bolder and maturer adepts swear; and when simple terms are inadequate, they resort to combinations which are as absurd as they are wicked. Blasphemous epithets are piled upon each other with a prodigality of which

one would think a fiend from the bottomless pit would alone be capable. This habit seems to defy correction by any of the ordinary agencies. It is not usually indulged in religious homes. Decency restrains most boys (who may be otherwise well bred) from swearing before their sisters or mothers. At public schools (in the city at least) the prevalence of profane language is appalling; and many teachers have confessed their utter inability to cope with the evil. Attempts have been made to correct it in various ways, but with unsatisfactory results.

It would be natural to turn to our Sunday-schools for some tokens of success in correcting a habit so subversive of all religious impressions and associations. There, if anywhere, we might expect to find habitual reverence for the name, authority and attributes of the Creator. But it is far otherwise. The most casual inquiry will reveal the unwelcome truth that the lips of boys—ay, and girls too—connected with Protestant, evangelical Sunday-schools, are polluted with profane oaths and curses, and sometimes within speaking-distance of the very rooms in which they have been engaged (in form at least) as worshippers of Him whom they now insult and defy!

If we have succeeded in exhibiting the habit of profane cursing and swearing as a sin of great magnitude and aggravation, (and no sin, perhaps, reaches further or penetrates deeper into the substance and foundation of public and private virtue and safety;) and, if we have shown the inadequacy of any other existing human agency to eradicate or counteract the evil, it will be admitted that the Sunday-school will not be acting out of

its appropriate sphere, nor spending its strength upon a purpose unworthy of it, if it *systematically* sets itself to rescue the sacred name of Jehovah from such wanton and wide-spread contempt. If every Sunday-school which will be open next Lord's day, in all parts of the country, should apply its power, thus methodically and with all needful preparation, to the simple, single task of making all its pupils fear an oath, and *should succeed*, the boon conferred on every city and town, yea, on every family and individual, would be utterly inestimable!

As this concerted movement is not likely to be made, we must reduce the scale of operations. Suppose the schools of some single city, or, if that is still too broad a basis, suppose a single Sunday-school, or even a single class, to be put under the reformatory process; and we will then inquire *how our machinery may be brought to bear on such a distinct, specific purpose.* As a teacher of a class, then, I am to bend my present skill and energy to break my boys of this habit if they have fallen into it, or to fortify them against its contraction if they have not.

Does the habit exist? It may be very firmly fixed in every member of my class without my knowing or suspecting it. And it will require some skill to ascertain the fact without putting them on their guard by the attempt, and so defeating my purpose. I will assume, then, that they are not addicted to the practice, and will incidentally allude to its turpitude, and express my confidence that they will not only set a worthy example of freedom from this vice, but will reprove and discountenance it in others. A careful observation of manner and ex-

pression of countenance will seldom fail to detect the pupil or pupils (if any) whose conscience is not void of offence. Oftentimes the inquiry whether any of the boys with whom they associate, or the persons with or for whom they work, or their parents or elder brothers, have indulged in the use of profane language, will result not only in the disclosure of the general prevalence of the practice all around them, but also in the conviction that they must have extraordinary virtue to have been so familiar with vain oaths and curses and yet not to have used them. In most instances where such an investigation is pushed, there will be a prompt confession of guilt, and generally an inculpation of others. "I swear sometimes, but he" (indicating another boy) "swears like a pirate." Or, "I swear when I am mad; but Jim, or Harry, or Peter, swears every time he talks." In these and other ways the sore place is laid open, to be probed and healed with all the skill we can command.

The first thing is to possess our own minds with a proper apprehension of the inherent atrociousness of the sin. As we have said, it strikes at the foundation of all moral obligation. How futile the attempt to enforce filial obedience by citing and explaining the fifth commandment, if our heavenly Father is habitually dishonoured! If you speak to a child of the obligation he is under to his parents for their unceasing care and kindness, and what monstrous ingratitude is shown in disobeying their commands or lightly regarding their wishes, what weight can we expect him to give to our expostulations if he feels no reverence for his higher and greater benefactor, of whose bounty his earthly parents

are but the almoners? So of the Sabbath, on the sanctity of which so much of the physical, moral and religious well-being of mankind depends. Vain will be an attempt to make those reverence God's Sabbaths who habitually profane his name; and as for prayer, in every form and use of it, it must be mere mockery for them to engage in it. But above and beyond all this stands the express and solemn prohibition of the high and mighty Ruler of the universe:—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain!" Can we find a purpose demanding earlier or more vigorous effort than the setting of this sin, which so deeply affects the whole basis and virtue of our teaching, in its true light before our pupils? If we can impress their minds with reverence for the name and authority of God, we may hope, by promised aid, to draw them to a contemplation of his gracious attributes, and ultimately to a cheerful submission of their bodies and spirits to the service of the Redeemer. We cannot hope for such a blessing while their lips are polluted every hour with cursing and blasphemy.

Passing by such considerations as the reasonableness of showing reverence to a superior and gratitude to a benefactor, and also all arguments from analogy, which are many and irresistible, I would go at once to the third commandment, and have it committed, every word and letter of it, accurately to memory, explaining the force and meaning of it and making sure that its full purport is apprehended. This end accomplished, I would proceed to show them the origin and authority of the command. A very brief and intelligible sketch of the history of the race for the first twenty-five hundred years could be

given in ten minutes, sufficiently full and particular to answer all present purposes; and this would bring the whole population of the earth, by whom the true God was recognised, into a vast plain under the brow of a gigantic mountain or range of mountains, the rocky summits of which seem to pierce the clouds,—the only locality known in the Holy Land that seems to answer all the requisites of the sacred history. What was the number thus collected? My boys will be interested in this inquiry if I am careful not to overload it with figures. They have seen large gatherings at some public show, perhaps, or at a popular election. They have an idea of three or four or ten thousand persons, possibly. I will gradually enlarge their conception to six hundred thousand men, all over twenty and under seventy, and with them as many more women and perhaps twice as many children. They are not all mingled together in disorder, like a mob, but are distributed with the regularity and precision of a standing army in their encampment. I will show them a plot of the distribution of the tribes with their tents and banners, which may help to impress them with the idea of the vastness of the multitude and the grandeur of the scenes which surround them. Suppose we have a rough outline map of the group of mountains of which Sinai was one of the summits. There is one in half a dozen books,—perhaps even in one of the library-books. Let us now fancy we behold this vast assemblage of human beings surrounded by a howling wilderness, and led hither under the miraculous guidance of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They have halted by divine direction, that they may re-

ceive a direct communication from the God of their fathers. The mountain, from the summit of which it is to be announced, is scrupulously guarded from profane approach. It is not to be touched by man or beast, on penalty of death. Two days in succession have been set apart for the people to prepare themselves, by various ablutions, fasts and sacrifices, for the solemn annunciation. On the morning of the third day, the summit of Sinai is enveloped in thick darkness and in smoke, which ascends as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quakes greatly. No wonder that the servant of God is filled with fear and trembling, as, in obedience to the divine command, he ascends into the midst of this terrific display of almighty power.

It was then and there that, by a positive and explicit command from God himself, every vain or trifling use of the name of Jehovah was prohibited. Of course, any profane or irreverent use of the name of his well-beloved and only-begotten Son, or of the Holy Ghost, the divine Comforter and Sanctifier of men, or of the acts or attributes of Deity in the ordering and governing of the world, must be regarded as clearly coming within the scope of the command and subjecting the offender to its penalty.

The first impression of a giddy and thoughtless mind might be that this is a very arbitrary law, and that it is scarcely to be believed that such a being as God is represented to be would make so much of a profane expression, casually escaping from the lips and without any intention in the utterer's mind to treat the divine Being or his authority with levity. But do we reason

in this way when the name of a respected parent or relative is contemned? What would be thought of a son who would not resent an insult to the honour or name of a respected parent? And has any earthly relative a claim to a prompt vindication or protection from the reproach or contumely of a fellow-creature, which cannot be urged with infinitely greater force against any light or trifling use of the name or attributes of the God and Father of us all? Shall we esteem it a mark of extreme hardihood and degradation for a son to contemn his father's name and authority, or for a subject to throw scorn and derision on the crown and dignity of the king, and not regard with abhorrence and detestation the slightest irreverence towards the name of that august and glorious Being by whom kings reign and princes decree justice?

By such representations of the nature and turpitude of the habit of profaneness, illustrated and enforced by all the skill and clearness which I can command, the minds of my pupils will be more or less drawn to a serious view of the case. If their age and maturity of mind will justify it, I might perhaps attempt to convey to them some impression of the single attribute of the *self-existence* of God, as clothing him with a dignity and glory which must inspire any thoughtful mind with the deepest awe. This idea would be susceptible of indefinite expansion, and might be pursued as far as the interest of the class would justify.

Occasion would be taken before the dismission of the school to put into the hands of one of the class some volume from the library which treats with judgment and clearness of the sin of profaneness. A general

idea of the purport or design of the volume would be given, and a careful reading of it, during the week, enjoined. No teacher could make a request of this kind without effect. If he could, it would be proof in itself that some very serious defect existed in his relation to his class. The book being taken and read would furnish occasion for a return to the subject on the following Sunday, and, with a brief review of the chief points which had been discussed in the class and also in the book, it might be given to another, and so pass entirely around. And thus, without further detail, we should complete the application of the Sunday-school machinery to this specific vice. We are well aware that it is much easier to lay out a piece of work than to do it; and the mind of many a teacher may suddenly revert to some individual member of his present or some former class, and he may say to himself, "I would like to see you try your hand on John Smith or Bill Jones. It would be as much as the machinery could do to keep them in their places long enough to hear me out."

As we do not know these two particular youths, it might be presumptuous to predict success with them. But he who proposes such an experiment will allow us to say that we should not venture on it with very sanguine expectations, unless we had secured a state of things favourable to its success. In all this discussion we have been thinking of a class whose confidence and affection we have won by months of faithful and affectionate teaching. We have succeeded in making them think of their hour with us, not with aversion or indifference, but with real plea-

sure. They know and feel that if there is any one in the wide world who is really interested in their well-being and who would sacrifice personal ease and pleasure for their good, it is their Sunday-school teacher. Does any one doubt that such attachments and mutual regards exist in Sunday-schools? We should venture nothing in appealing to thousands for testimony to this point which would neither be gainsaid nor resisted. Often have we seen the tear of gratitude fill the eye at the remembrance of one who occupied but a very humble place as a Sunday-school teacher. And it is where the relation bears something of this sacred and intimate character that the process we have described is to be applied with the largest promise of success.

The failure which we have so much occasion to lament in the application of our moral machinery to specific ends, often proceeds from the unskilful manner of using it. Take, for example, *Sabbath-desecration*, to which we have just referred. Few Sunday-school boys of ordinary intelligence and observation are ignorant of the common apologies for a misuse of sacred time. There is the need, it is said, of a taste of fresh air after a week's close confinement to the shop or factory, and we have the opportunity to worship God "in the temple of nature" and in the immediate contemplation of his works of benevolence and power in the fields and woods. There is the benevolent dispensation of the gospel, doing away with the rigid exactions of the Mosaic economy. There is the saying of the divine Teacher, that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, &c. &c. These and a score of excuses like them, for a desecration of the day, they

have heard in the shop or at the corner conference, or have read them in the newspapers. And what impression is made on the minds of a class by a mere general exhortation to Sabbath-keeping? One sharp-witted boy will counteract the influence of a morning's exercise upon the minds of his comrades, by some jest that a Sunday newspaper supplies, about a law that forbade the beer to work, or a mother to kiss her child, on Sunday, or about the man that was buried in a snow-drift and frozen to death, because it was Sunday and he mustn't "work" himself out, &c. &c. Then there is the very common, but not very conclusive, argument from the failure of enterprises which disregard the Sabbath,—such as that a party who laid by reached the end of a journey sooner than another party on the same journey who travelled on the Sabbath; or that a man who got his crop in on Sunday had his barn struck by lightning and its contents consumed, while his neighbour, who let his crop lie out from a regard to the Sabbath, suffered no loss; or that boys or men who go out on the water on Sunday are so often drowned. Whatever weight these and other like arguments may deserve, they have very little with boys or men whose habits or principles have not been formed on a Christian basis. However true what you say may be, they will be slow to believe upon the teacher's assertion that a journey of five hundred miles will be performed as soon by a traveller who lies by one day—no matter for what cause—as by another traveller, on the same road and in just the same circumstances, who does not lie by. And if they or their companions have often taken a Sunday-sail without

getting wet, they will ascribe the "ill luck" of others to any thing rather than the *day*. The introduction of the arguments which are thus met may be very well if used *in aid* of a more direct and unanswerable course of instruction; but when relied upon as the only or chief support of a lesson on the duty of keeping the Lord's day holy, they will be likely to fail when a time of temptation comes.

There is a better way. There lies at the base of the whole matter the positive enactment of the Almighty; but, beyond and beside that, there are laws engraved on the physical constitution of men and beasts, which he that runs may read; and among them is one which peremptorily, and under a severe penalty, demands the exemption of one-seventh part of time from labour. The experiment has been often tried; and it has never yet failed to prove true that the corporeal, intellectual and moral powers of a human being are limited in their capacity of endurance. To violate the laws which prescribe this limit is sure, in some way, to bring upon the offender early or late retribution. France tried ten days as the interval, and suffered irreparably. The rotation of crops is not more obviously required by the laws of agriculture, than is the rest of man and beast at intervals of seven days by the laws of mind and matter. The wise teacher who means to leave no important part of his work half done will prepare himself on such a point as this, and will place his pupil on a vantage-ground in a debate with Sabbath-breakers from which they will find it no easy matter to dislodge him.

The views we have taken of the Sabbath question

apply with equal force to the subject of *intemperance*. If the broad doctrine is laid down to a class of boys that any use of intoxicating drink is *sinful*, a teacher may be very much perplexed by questions which a bright boy of fourteen will be quite competent to ask: such as, whether the wine of Scripture was intoxicating? If nay, whence the propriety of the caution, Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess? If *yea*, why is wine spoken of as that which makes man's heart glad, and why commended by an apostolic father to his son in the Spirit? And, either way, is it not a creature of God? And is not every creature of God good and to be received with thanksgiving? It will not be understood that these questions, as urged here, are entitled to the weight which those who put them suppose they possess. They are cited merely to illustrate the doctrine that a Sunday-school class is not to be put off with the mere *dictum* of a teacher, or with any shallow or superficial disposition of a subject; but, if the matter is important enough to be a distinct subject of instruction, (and who will doubt that *intemperance* is such a one?) it must be presented and examined and discussed with great thoroughness and intelligence, or it will be perhaps to the lasting prejudice of the class that it was ever introduced to their notice in the Sunday-school.

But it is not only nor chiefly in regard to moral subjects that great skill is required to adapt the Sunday-school machinery to the accomplishment of specific purposes. We shall find it equally indispensable when brought to bear on social and economical questions.

It may be taken as an axiom that all suffering results from the violation of some law which our bene-

volent Creator has given for the preservation of our moral or physical well-being. The offices or channels through which relief is extended are as numerous and diversified as the phases of suffering. *Money*, which is usually put *first*, is really *last*. Suppose we take from real life an example or two by way of an exposition of this principle. A decently-dressed woman calls at your house and begs for a shawl to protect a poor neighbour of her's from the cold when she goes out to her daily work. You have a shawl. You have laid it aside for this very purpose. Why not give it to her and have done with it? If you do not know the person who calls, it would be very injudicious to intrust to a stranger what you intend for a third person. It may be pawned for strong drink, or retained by one who is not in want. Better go, or send, and satisfy yourself that the need exists, and see that it is supplied. You wisely conclude to look for yourself. You find the object of your charity, and ascertain that she is a superior needle-woman, capable of earning her living, but not able to find work where she is now. If she could hire a room in some part of the city nearer the demand for work, she might succeed. You give her the shawl, and with it a few words of counsel and encouragement. In a day or two, you are at a meeting of the directors of your Industrial Home or Orphan Society, and allude to the case of this woman. A young lady present immediately recollects a poor woman whom she has seen during the week who has a room to rent, and perhaps it would exactly suit. The parties are brought together, and the room is taken. Two wants are thus promptly supplied,—the want of a *room* and

the want of a *tenant*. But how came the young lady to know of such a room? Why, simply by visiting the mother of one of her class in the Sunday-school. It was not any part of her plan to obtain any such information; nor could she have known that it might be of advantage to her or to any one else for her to possess it. The indirect result of this single visit accomplished—what?

1. It secured a tenant for a vacant room, and thus helped a poor woman to pay her rent.

2. It put another poor woman in a comfortable and convenient position to earn her own living.

3. It laid the mother of one of her Sunday-school children under great obligation to her, and thus increased her influence and her power to do good both to mother and child. It will take a strong force to sunder that tie.

4. It brought to the new tenant Christian care and sympathy, which she had before lacked, and paved the way for her attendance on the stated means of grace. Thus is exemplified, by a single real and comparatively unimportant incident in humble life, the power of the Sunday-school machinery, in its legitimate movements, to improve and elevate social condition and character. It was all the work of that little wheel in our machinery called VISITING.

Would you see a contrast of this? You can have it. We met a little girl in the street begging a penny from each passer-by. A well-dressed man had given her a three-cent piece just before we met, and the following dialogue ensued:—

"Please give me a penny, good man."

"Why, my little girl, you ought not to be begging in the street. You will fall into idle and vicious habits and grow up to be very wicked, I am afraid. Where do you live?"

"In —— Street."

"Have you no father nor mother?"

"No: I live with my aunt."

"How long have you lived with her?"

"She raised me."

"Where do you go to Sunday-school?" To my surprise, and with evident trust, she named a highly respectable Protestant church in —— Street.

"Who is your teacher?"

"I don't know. I only went there last Sunday."

"Where did you go before that?"

"Oh, I didn't go nowhere since last summer."

She was evidently reluctant to disclose her former Sunday-school connection. At length she named another highly respectable Protestant church, that counts some ten or twelve hundred children under its Sunday-school care; and told us the name of her teacher,—a well-educated lady, who has been teaching for some years.

"Well, my child, why did you not go back to your old teacher?" Looking up very confidingly, as if sure that her apology would be satisfactory, she said,—

"I met a lady in the street one day last week, and she gave me three cents and told me to come to *their* school, between —— and —— in —— Street, and they would take care of me."

Is there any thing impertinent or censorious in the inquiry whether a faithful employment of the machinery of a Sunday-school might not have produced a tie

between that former teacher and her pupil that the offer of a three-cent piece would not break?

There is one view of the subject before us which it would be well for teachers to ponder. There is no effect without a cause. The almost universal inquiry in conventions and teachers' meetings and Sunday-school essays is for some method of retaining older pupils under instruction. The *practicability* of keeping them in their place as pupils till they are fitted to become teachers themselves, is established by many instances of success. We can call to mind teachers and classes, personally known to us, whose mutual ties were strengthened rather than weakened by the lapse of time. And it is obvious that this must be the result unless some counteracting influence is interposed. The gradual advancement of the pupils opens new and wider fields of instruction. Long intimacy with the mental and moral peculiarities of individuals guides the teacher in his modes of imparting and enforcing truth. The sympathies and habits of teachers and pupils become more and more homogeneous. The foundations of character and opinions are laid broader and deeper at each interview. And as with the advance of the pupil from childhood to youth and from youth to riper years the relations and interests of life assume new importance and involve higher obligations, so the character and grade of instruction rise in like ratio, and the teacher becomes also the Christian companion, friend and guide of the pupil. It is one of the striking peculiarities of the machinery we are contemplating, that it can adapt itself to the minute subdivisions of society. If you have ever seen

one of the beautiful contrivances for the manufacture of machine cards, by which, without the intervention of human hands, each little section of wire forming the tooth is cut off and bent twice, the proper punctures made in the leather with an exactness of order and a precision of direction which no ingenuity could improve, and each tooth taken up and inserted in its place almost too rapidly for the eye to follow without painful effort,—you have some notion of what we mean when we speak of the capacity of the Sunday-school machinery to adapt itself to the minute subdivisions of society. Each of us separates from four to ten children from their respective families and from their ordinary associations and companionships, and subjects them individually to the genial influences and heavenly teachings of the gospel of the grace of God. If we are what we ought to be, our interests and sympathies, for the time-being, are concentrated upon this little group, each individual of which becomes to us of more interest than all other children in the world outside of our blood-relations. No pastor can so segregate a portion of his flock from the rest. No secular teacher can so individualize his pupils. And this individual, personal intercourse is indirectly, but most effectively, extended to each of from four to ten *families* represented in the class, with whom we are brought into the most auspicious acquaintance, and whose physical, economical, social and moral condition we have a favourable opportunity to improve;—not, indeed, without labour and study and self-denial and cross-bearing, but with the prospect of a rich and unfading reward.

If all the children in any of our large cities that are willing to attend Sunday-school were brought into it, and all the teaching power of the evangelical church, or even the larger part of it, were set to work, there would scarcely be a Protestant family without a friend and counsellor from among the wise and good. We never meet a beggar-boy in the street who can give us the address of his Sunday-school and his teacher, that we do not feel sick at heart. We are so sure that a state of things exists at such a boy's home which the machinery of the Sunday-school is well adapted to change for the better, that we long to be in that teacher's place, that we might enjoy the luxury of being used in such an office of love.

Who of us does not feel that a great work is done for the well-being of any city by gathering into one of its Sunday-schools—as was once done in New York in a single month—two hundred and thirty new pupils? And who questions that the visits paid to eleven hundred *families* within that short period were worth all they cost, even had no such revenue of pupils accrued to the school? And now suppose those families represented by the two hundred and thirty children should receive a weekly or even a semi-monthly visit from the kind Christian friends who have taken charge of them as teachers; and suppose that in such a visit a warm interest is manifested in all the cares and anxieties which oppress a care-worn mother, and that means are set on foot to supply any little necessaries of food or clothing that are otherwise beyond their reach, and that thus a sort of telegraphic wire is stretched from each of these homes to the Sunday-school-room, so that

every impulse or emotion at either end passes to the other; and suppose these invisible lines of communication were traversing your city in every direction, now running up to garrets and now down to cellars, never broken by storms nor "out of working-order:" what, think you, would be the estimate which even an ungodly world would put on the Sunday-school machinery as *means to an end?* What would they say of it as an instrument to elevate and improve, to sanctify and save, a generation of children? If the agency reached no further than simply to make sure that no child in attendance at the Sunday-school should be kept from the daily school for want of wholesome food or comfortable clothing, it would accomplish a work of charity which, for economy and thoroughness, could not be matched,—not only because it would protect the children themselves from suffering, but because it would inevitably lead to the improvement of the condition of the whole family, temporally and spiritually.

The connection between what has been just said with the subject under consideration will be readily perceived. Our purpose has been to show that the value of the services of Sunday-school teachers would be greatly enhanced were they to propose to themselves a definite *end.* If they are impressed with the rudeness and ill breeding of a class of boys, or the bold and immodest manners of a class of girls,—if they notice the prevalence of any vice in their class, as falsehood, irreverence, tale-bearing, envy, vanity, impatience of restraint or contempt of authority,—let them consider that each and all of these are but the "cropping out" (as miners say) of a deep and broad

vein of corruption. Let them inquire at once how they can bring the machinery which they have under their control to bear most efficiently on the precise evil which they desire to cure. The selection and improvement of the appointed lesson; the incidental conversation in the class; the library; the visit; the mutual influence of the members of the class; the affectionate note; the momentary interview before or after school: these and a hundred other means constitute the little levers and wheels and pulleys by the skilful working of which, under the divine blessing, the machinery is kept in operation and its vast result accomplished.

"With the divine blessing,"—a phrase which may well be used as a sort of protest against any feeling of presumption, but which is oftentimes introduced parenthetically and with a very inadequate conception of its meaning. We would that Sunday-school teachers had greater faith in the efficacy of prayer. There is, indeed, a mystery about it which, perhaps, occasions perplexity and remissness when the duty and privilege are acknowledged. It seems incomprehensible how the infinite and unchangeable God, whose purposes are not formed (as those of all finite creatures must be) upon contingencies, can regard the wishes of weak, blind, sinful creatures like us. But we forget that the spirit of prayer is itself the gift of God, and that his children, in uttering their desires and petitions, in the same breath submit the manner and measure of their fulfilment to his infinite wisdom. He has constituted a system of means by which he is pleased to accomplish his gracious designs. Among these means he has instituted prayer, and has given us a specimen of the manner in which

it should be offered. He has also so arranged the order of his government as to make one agency dependent on another, and thus to connect, by an endless chain of causes and effects, his infinite purpose and our feeble and inconstant attempts to serve him. We need wisdom to see, strength to seize and grace to improve and extend all means and opportunities for saving a single soul. These means and opportunities are so connected with the results as to constitute a chain, every link of which is essential to its integrity; and God has the government of the whole.

"Heaven and earth, and whatever they contain,—all nature and the God of nature,—unite to accomplish the purposes of divine mercy. So that when we merely breathe a wish which God sees to be conceived for his glory and the success of his gracious designs, in the salvation even of a little child, one part of nature, animate or inanimate, or one grade of invisible agencies by which her laws are administered, echoes it to another, till at length all join, in perfect and sublime harmony, to transmit it to the ear of the Almighty! Who will be faint-hearted or sluggish in a service which has a reserved force like this on which to fall back?"

This grand motive-power of all our Sunday-school machinery being secured, what may we not anticipate from the proper application of our vast resources? The reader may have been in a busy factory, with its thousands of spindles in rapid and ceaseless motion, and may have looked upon and handled the exquisitely-wrought fabrics that its manifold operations produce. Of what can it more naturally remind us than of a

well-organized, well-officered and well-taught Sunday-school, with its various departments wisely adjusted and working in beautiful harmony? The buzz is not that of disordered or rusty machinery, grating and jarring on the ear and giving tokens of derangement and ruin, but the industrious hum of a bee-hive, indicating that each has something to do and is intent on doing it, while through the whole little community order, harmony and prosperity hold undivided empire.

Is your Sunday-school so managed? If not, is its improvement unworthy of an effort?

PART II.

THE

INTERNAL RELATIONS

OF THE

SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

In the former part of this treatise we have considered (Chap. I.) the place, capacity and requirement of the Sunday-school; (Chap. II.) the mutual interest of parents and teachers in its success; (Chap. III.) the general duties and relations of teachers; and (Chap. IV.) the importance of a direct aim to a specific end in the working of our machinery. We are now, in Part II.,to discuss more in detail (Chap. I.) the organization, (Chap. II.) discipline and (Chap. III.) instruction.

CHAPTER I.

ORGANIZATION.

§ 1. *General principles.*

THE greater the simplicity of a school's organization, the more likely it is to be successful. It is obvious that there must be a controlling power somewhere; and the classification of the pupils, as well as the distribution of duties and responsibilities among the subordinate officers of the school, must be such as to secure at all times an efficient and easy administration, with the least possible show of rule and authority.

The most perfect organization will not compensate for a superintendent's incompetency, nor for the indolence or inconstancy of teachers; but a good superintendent and faithful and industrious teachers can do much to compensate for defects of organization as well as for local inconveniences.

When the number to be instructed is large, and the accommodations will admit of it, the sexes should be divided and occupy different rooms. Such an arrangement does not necessarily involve the appointment of two superintendents. The apartments may be so contrived as to be supervised by one officer and addressed by one speaker. We are aware that very plausible reasons can be urged for the occupation of the same apartment by the male and female classes,— such as its effect in subduing rudeness, inspiring self-

respect and cultivating good manners. Indeed, we believe the practice of constituting even mixed classes of boys and girls from seven to seventeen years of age has its advocates.* While we cannot yield our convictions that these views are erroneous, we are far from denying their title to serious consideration. A competent female superintendent of a girls' school is more easily obtained than a competent male superintendent of boys alone or of a mixed school. The discipline required to keep a boys' school in due order is quite needless, and may be out of place, in a girls' school. How far the measures to be adopted for the general advancement of the schools shall be conjointly originated and matured must depend on circumstances. Ordinarily, the concurrence of all who are engaged in the common service is desirable, not only for mutual encouragement and sympathy, but to give strength and efficiency to their efforts.

The necessity of judgment and discrimination in the arrangement of a school is apparent when it is considered of what incongruous materials it is composed. Among the teachers are various grades of intelligence, experience and skill. And the crowd of children presents every variety of breeding, disposition and capacity. The task imposed is to gather out from the mixed multitude little companies of six or eight who may be most profitably instructed together, and then to select for each company the most suitable teacher. By an arbitrary division into classes, and a random assignment of teachers, the interest of all parties is likely to be sa-

* "Report of Conference of the Teachers of Friends' First-Day School, held in Liverpool, January, 1859."—London, Bennett, pp. 132.

crificed. "No method (or want of method) is more likely to distract and impede a teacher, and to render his instructions like unsightly patchwork," than to give him a class in which there are some who can comprehend a course of reasoning, while others can scarcely understand the plainest words which the teacher uses. The class should be so constituted that its members can go on together in the general process of instruction. (Note V.)

The causes and consequences of an irregular or haphazard organization have been thus graphically described:—

"Entering the school and glancing round, it is easy to perceive, in the first place, that the classes are very unequal in size. Here is a teacher devoting himself to some three or four children; yonder is one encompassed with twenty. A closer scrutiny will detect as great a difference in the component parts of a class. Boys of bright, intelligent faces, ready in reply, quick in comprehension, are ranged side by side with the dirty, uncombed, unwashed, uncouth lads, who show too clearly ignorance, and its companion, dulness, on their countenances.

"Let us pass on to the superintendent's desk, and endeavour to trace this effect to its cause. Half a dozen new scholars are just coming in. Let us see how they will be distributed.

"But see! They do not all get so far as the superintendent. Yonder little fellow, looking timidly round, has caught the eye of a playmate or neighbour, who, alive to the impunity of such a step, beckons 'the new boy' to his own class. The invitation is obeyed: the teacher

treats it as a very orthodox admission, hands the little stranger a Bible or Testament, and writes down his name, (if he thinks of it,) in pencil, in his class-book; and that is all.

"Wait a few Sundays, and our friend at the desk yonder, calling over the names, will be requested by the teacher to write down the name of Dick Dawson. 'Who is he?' 'A boy in my class.' 'Who admitted him?' 'He came: that is all I know of him.' Down goes the boy's name. But—'lightly come, and lightly go'—Dick Dawson does not make his appearance for several Sundays, and the superintendent inquires what has become of him. 'I do not know.' 'But have you not been to visit him?' 'I do not know his address.' 'I will look for it in the admission-book.' The search is useless; the sole entry is Dick Dawson. His friend only knew him as a school-fellow on weekdays, and the tie is snapped!

"We have known such a case as this. 'Miss ——, you have put down the name of Mary —— in your class-book. Who is she?' A shade of regret passed over the teacher's face as she replied, 'She only came once; and I failed to take her address.' I grieved at the thought that we had lost an opportunity; for who can tell if that child ever again found her way to a Sunday-school?

"Let us return to the other young strangers, whom we left standing in the middle of the school-room. They are beckoned up to the desk, and our friend proceeds to admit them.

"The first taken in hand is a tall, well-dressed lad, bearing the stamp of neatness in his general appear-

ance, and intelligence in his eyes. The queries are, 'What is your name? Where do you live? Can you read?' He is then booked for the first class, and justly so; for if our friend thought it worth his while to ask, he would find that the boy's heart was full of his old Sunday-school, and his head well stored with the instructions of a kind and not forgotten teacher, and that now, when circumstances have changed his neighbourhood, the boy yearns to find another such tie. But, clinging to his hand, is his little brother, who naturally evinces a decided repugnance to part from the only friend he yet knows in the new school. A kind word or two might encourage him; but our worthy friend is afraid of 'a scene,' and his resource is to put the two boys together, into a class beneath the acquirements of the elder brother and above the capacity of the younger.

"Next comes a total contrast. A great, rough lad has been impelled by some freak, or tempted by some reward, to go to school, a place hitherto little indebted to him for any attention. 'Can you read?' 'No.' 'Have you ever been to school?' 'Yes: I knows my alphabet.' Our friend hesitates a moment; but a glance at the *size* of the poor lad settles the question: he must go into the first class. See the silent dismay of the teacher, and the uneasiness of the well-taught boys, as the rough stranger is introduced. 'Mr. ——, I have brought you a new scholar. He has been at Sunday-school before, though he seems to have forgotten a good deal of what he learned: still, I dare say, you will kindly help him on; and he must pay great attention.—Won't you, my lad?'

"Next come two or three boys who present no particular subject for remark. They are drafted off into different classes, in accordance with a hasty impression rather than on any settled principle. One, who can read very fluently, is placed among boys much more advanced in actual knowledge than himself; another, without that qualification, is accordingly classed with inferior minds. Others are put into a class which presents an array of almost empty forms, in the hope of filling up gaps,—others, on the contrary, added to the already overflowing numbers of a faithful teacher, who contrives to *keep* those intrusted to him.

"Now, it may be said, what does all this matter? The children are taught: what more would you have?

"As an answer to this, and by way of proving the importance of a good classification, let us suppose our actual investigations carried on; let us follow these newly-admitted scholars to their classes, and see if there are any evil consequences which can fairly and indisputably be traced to a neglect of the point for which we are pleading.

"And first let us revert to my illustration of the way in which a boy is sometimes knowingly underrated. We will seat ourselves by the teacher to whom the boy is introduced. After a few brief inquiries, (necessarily brief, not to interfere with the teaching,) the boy is absorbed into a party of school-fellows inferior to himself both in amount of knowledge and in skill in using that knowledge. Every one concerned will quickly discover this. The questions put by the teacher, in accordance with what he knows to be the intellectual level of the class, either are answered by

the new-comer with ease and rapidity, leaving all others far behind, or are received by him in silence, as unworthy of any exertion. The other boys soon feel the superiority of their new school-fellow, and run the double risk of feeling jealous of his success, or of relapsing into indolent inactivity, under the conviction that every question put collectively will be answered without any exertion on their part. The teacher sighs for a class of such well-informed boys, grows dissatisfied with the others, and finds that he must either teach above their level, to interest the new-comer, or incur the danger of chilling and alienating him by persevering in the simpler forms of instruction demanded by the inferior powers of the others.

"The evil will not often stop here: in nine cases out of ten the boy will leave the school.

"Some may object that there would be no end of indulgences if we consulted the whims and fancies of children, and that the authority of the parent ought to avail to enforce attendance. Now, we plead for no whims or fancies. We depreciate no rightful authority when we say that the boy ought not, *in this manner*, to be allowed to contract any dislike to the school. Occasions will arise, especially in cases of misconduct, when the alienation of the boy's affections must be risked. But the evil which I am condemning is a needless and unjustifiable cause of offence; and if the teacher should find his scholar grow irregular, and finally leave, without being able to assign any other reason than the one in question, the blame rests less with the boy for caprice or discontent than with the managers of the school for injudiciousness.

"Let us suppose the boy to remain, petted, held up as a pattern, admired, and envied. Is this the atmosphere likely to be good for him? If he should become conceited, vain, forward, (as it is but natural he should,) the evil cannot be altogether charged on him: the blame must rest partly on the carelessness or the want of discernment which classed him among lads so unequal to him in attainments.

"We speak on this point with many painful recollections of similar cases of *spoiling*, in which, had the child been placed among equals, his conceit would have been rubbed off, and his quickness made a blessing, not an injury.

"Now let us turn to the first class. Suppose them (as we well may) studying some prophecy, or even endeavouring to master a chapter out of an epistle, such as the 1st of Hebrews, or the 13th or 15th of the 1st of Corinthians: take up the superintendent's introduction, described above, and let the well-taught and intelligent boys make room for the stranger, not without some ill-repressed disinclination to sit next to the unwashed face and hands and soiled dress.

"The teacher's heart half fails him, but *he* must welcome the stranger, whom he cannot but pity. It is with no surprise that he finds the poor fellow utterly unable to say who the Apostle Paul was, or Isaiah,—ignorant of the meaning of an epistle, and only guessing at prophecy. Allow that he knows something of the grand outline of the gospel, can repeat such texts as that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' and can answer a few questions on the first chapters of Genesis, still, between such elementary knowledge as

this, and the stores which his class-mates have acquired by years of steady attendance, there is a difference so great that no ingenuity on the part of the teacher can systematically combine both in one course of instruction. Take so simple a case as the finding a parallel text: our poor stranger scarcely forms an idea where to look for it before his practised school-fellows have found it, read it and grasped its application. Is a trait of character to be illustrated by some familiar Scripture instance? He needs as much explanation of the illustration as of the point illustrated. The very answers of his neighbours must be interpreted to him, and terms and phrases familiar to them must be simplified and explained, unless the teacher would witness a puzzled look, followed by an abstracted or else restless inattention.

"It may be said that such difficulties as these must be encountered by every clergyman who looks down from his pulpit on the labourer, the merchant and the mechanic, the polished man of science and the man of two ideas, and has to proclaim to all, at once, that gospel which is essential to all.

"True; but we appeal to any clergyman whether this be not one of the chief difficulties of his sacred work as a preacher, and whether indeed he be not compelled, *practically*, to make a compromise, and, whilst aiming at simplicity, yet utter much which only the educated portion of his auditory can grasp.

"Now, it cannot be shown that the *necessity* which exists in this case applies also to Sunday-school teaching; and, if not, the evil is inexcusable.

"What, then, is the proper method to pursue in classifying the scholars of a Sunday-school?

"If we admit that the object is the spiritual and moral welfare of the children, it must then follow that those arrangements which tend to promote that object most effectually are so far the best, and ought to be adopted.

"If to place a boy below or above his level—to disregard alike his feelings and his attainments—to crowd him into an overflowing class—or to leave his position entirely to accident—are all injurious to the effective working of the school, then the simple converse will also be admitted, and the duty of the superintendent in that point will be allowed to be this:—To bestow attention on the new-comers, so as to form a tolerably accurate opinion of their true standing, and then to act upon the knowledge so acquired by placing them just where the influence of the school will reach them most powerfully,—which will generally be among a moderate number of boys, of their own level in attainments, and under a teacher of proportionate education and ability.

"There is no *single* test of a boy's proper position. Age clearly is not so, for even among equally-educated boys the intellect of one will grow much more rapidly than that of another. Stature will not be dreamed of as a rule, although it must be confessed that there is something pleasing to the eye in the gradations of classes so arranged. Nor is the mere art of reading a good test, taken alone; for many teachers read badly enough.

"Yet, whilst none of these can be exclusively relied on, they must each have their influence in the classification; and with them a wise superintendent will also

combine considerations which arise from the state of that particular school; as, for instance, the relative excellence of the teachers of the respective classes,—their faithfulness and regularity.

"He will also do well to note from time to time how far the result shows his correctness in the classification; and we would especially urge this duty with reference to troublesome children. Without denying the fault of a wilful, high-spirited, animated lad, on the one hand, or a calm, indolent and lifeless one, on the other, we would yet remind a superintendent that teachers also vary in their temperament, and that the boy who under one treatment seems to grow insubordinate might, under a firmer hand, turn his energies to the best account, and a boy who, sensitive and timid, seems to be thoroughly inanimate and downcast when under the management of a teacher of great energy and even impetuosity, might thrive and grow in moral and spiritual beauty when transplanted to the more genial soil of a class where the teacher could appreciate and *manage* whilst he *improved* the softer character in question."

§ 2. *Affinities—Mission schools.*

In the organization of schools connected with religious congregations, there are oftentimes social relations which must be respected, and yet not so as to be to the detriment of the general interests of the school. If two pupils desire to be together whose influence over each other or over the other members of the class is likely to be injurious, it should not be allowed. It is to be feared that unhappy intimacies are sometimes formed or cherished in our Sunday-schools, to which a super-

intendent or teacher of ordinary discernment could not be blind, and which, if known, should be interrupted. In organizing country schools, many of the embarrassments to which we have referred are obviated by the homogeneousness of the population and the greater equality of education and social position; but even in these there is need of sound judgment in so forming the classes and assigning teachers as to secure the utmost harmony and vigour which the materials can supply.

There is another and peculiar class of schools which deserve special notice. The condition of multitudes of children and youth in the densely-populated districts of London, whose apparel, personal habits and social condition were such as seemed to forbid their connection with ordinary Sunday-schools, called for special provision; and it was furnished in the institution of what are there called *Ragged schools*. They were so organized and constructed that the poorest and meanest attendant should feel at ease and find pleasure and profit in them.

In our own cities thousands of children and youth are found whose moral condition and prospects are no better than those we have described; and, although we may be slow to acknowledge that so low a depth of poverty and degradation is reached by them, it cannot be denied that our ordinary Sunday-schools do not meet their case; and hence the establishment of a class of schools similar in their general aim and organization to the Ragged schools of England, but bearing the less offensive title of *mission schools*.

The use of this term is, however, of doubtful pro-

priety, for the organization indicated by it is in no respect different from an ordinary Sunday-school, but is, in fact, eminently entitled to that name; while the schools attached to a congregation, and under the direct supervision of some church, might more properly be called *church* or *catechetical* schools. The class of children gathered into these mission schools are precisely those for whom Sunday-schools were originally *exclusively* designed.

It has been truly said that no one can look upon one of those little Arabs that throng the pavements of some of our city passage-ways without a feeling of pity. They silently appeal to us, not only as citizens, but as their elder brothers in humanity, to rescue them from the vice and filth by which they are surrounded, and to fit them for inevitable duties and responsibilities. To such a one,—

> "The prospect of life is cold and dark;
> And the passage seems rough for so frail a bark;
> Thy morn is wrapt in gloom, poor child,
> And the world to thee is a barren wild.
> But He from whose hands thy spirit came
> Can temper the wind to the shorn lamb,—
> Can make thee rest and walk at will
> By the pastures green and the waters still.
> The proud may look with disdainful eye,
> And the priest and the Levite may pass thee by;
> But the heart where feeling is not exiled
> Will pity the fate of the outcast child."

When the current of sympathy sets in this direction, a populous district of the city is selected, where children abound who, for some cause, are without religious instruction. The preliminaries to organization are the

same as in schools generally; but the qualifications of those who superintend or teach them must be adapted to the peculiarities of the pupils. More than an ordinary measure of faith, humility and patience will be indispensable. The predominant principle must be love,—love to souls for Christ's sake.

In these schools, especially, rare opportunities are enjoyed of diffusing the benign influence of the gospel through the habitations of want and wickedness. The avenues which they open to the hearts and homes which are otherwise almost inaccessible, and the sympathies that may be thus awakened in hearts unused to gentle emotions, cannot be too highly appreciated.

The chief obstacle to the organization of such schools is the want of suitable apartments and of an adequate supply of competent teachers. Not a little self-denial is involved in working a mine so dark and repulsive; but the product repays many times over every hour of faithful labour. Perhaps no department of Sunday-school service has returned a richer harvest in proportion to the pains bestowed.

The mode of proceeding in the organization of mission schools may be easily adapted to specific cases. The locality being designated and preliminary steps taken to excite an interest in the enterprise, some evangelical church, or the schools connected with it, may be invited to occupy it, sending a detachment from their own corps of teachers, and filling the vacancies thus created from the body of professed disciples who are not in service; or the needful help may be furnished from the same source without disturbing the arrangements of their own schools. There are Christians

enough in the various evangelical communions in the United States to supply every group of eight or ten uninstructed children with a teacher and still leave a little army of supernumeraries. And there are thousands of Christian men and women whose piety (even to human view) is deformed and rickety just for lack of the very exercise of faith and self-denial which is needed in our mission schools. Sometimes the school is organized and put in working-order and then consigned to the care of some neighbouring church which undertakes to supply its wants and look after its interests.

There is no more appropriate and natural enterprise to engage a church of Christ than the opening of these little fountains in the moral deserts of our great cities, whereby the perishing little ones for whom Christ died may be supplied with the water of life. Such schools, conducted on the sacred principles of the gospel and seeking the advancement of the kingdom of the Redeemer, irrespective of denominational or sectarian interests, will yield to the churches that support them a revenue of strength and power (under the divine blessing) which utterly exceeds all human estimate.

§ 3. *Collateral organizations.*

In every well-ordered Sunday-school there will be special provision, both of apartments and instruction, for infant children on one side and for adolescent pupils on the other. The apartments will be furnished suitably for their respective occupation, and the teaching-power will be adapted in force and quality to the cha-

racter of the pupils. The infant-school will prepare its scores or hundreds for advancement to the main body; while the older pupils will be drafted into one or more classes for separate and special instruction to fit them to teach others, or to prove in some other sphere of duty the thoroughness of their Sunday-school training. It is acknowledged on all hands that there is no weaker place in our Sunday-school machinery than is found here. Whatever may be the cause of the premature dissolution of Sunday-school ties, the fact is obvious and mortifying; while all abortive attempts to remedy the evil only aggravate it. In most instances, probably, the pupil outgrows the influence of the teacher and the attractions of the school; and if he can be transferred to a department which corresponds in its grade and appliances to his rapidly maturing moral and intellectual character, his connection with the course of instruction, though not with the general school, may be indefinitely prolonged and inconceivably blessed. A gifted teacher will find no more hopeful soil on which to bestow a work of faith and a labour of love, than twenty or thirty young persons from sixteen to twenty years of age.

To *retain* this class of pupils by a seasonable regard to their wants is much easier than to *reclaim* them when they have once dissolved their connection with the school. Hence, the organization of one or more such classes for both sexes should be part of the permanent arrangement of the school, and the utmost care should be taken to have them of such a character that the advancement to them should be a matter of eager anticipation. Not only the course of instruction, but the library and the appurtenances of the class-room,

and the intercourse with the teacher, should fall in with the innocent and natural feelings of that period of life.

§ 4. *Fluctuations.*

Few practices are more prejudicial to the good order and successful management of a Sunday-school than frequent changes in the composition of the classes. When once judiciously formed, they should not be disturbed but for good and sufficient cause.

If the relations of the teacher to his class involve (as they certainly do) the necessity of an intimate acquaintance and association with each pupil, and if much of the good to be accomplished depends (as it certainly does) on the growth and permanency of such an intimacy, it is clear that this relation when once formed should not be interrupted except for very grave reasons. To be putting a new scholar into a class, or taking one away, every month or two, is effectually to prevent the forming of any such close relationship. It is disheartening to a faithful teacher and highly disadvantageous to the pupil. Among the methods of avoiding such painful contingencies and yet providing for any changes which accessions to the school, or needful modifications of class-organization, may require, we have seen none which seems to us more sensible and practicable than the following:—

The regular, permanent teachers of the school have their regular, permanent classes, with the members of which they are expected to become acquainted and for their mental, moral and domestic condition to be in a proper degree responsible. Let them feel assured that their children shall not be removed to another class

without reasonable cause, nor any addition made but of a permanent attendant and with their full consent.

In an adjoining apartment we place under the care of one competent teacher all new scholars; and out of it every new teacher receives a class. When any of the regular teachers are absent and have provided no substitute, instead of distributing the children among the other classes,—as is commonly done,—they are removed to the reception room. If the teacher comes in during the session, he will take them in charge, or will find them in their place the next Sabbath. There may be twenty or thirty of this unclassed company; and, though of various ages, a skilful teacher can give them appropriate instruction for the brief time they are with him; and, being in a separate room, the teaching of so large a number does not disturb other classes.

When there is a temporary scarcity of teachers for any cause, the number of pupils assigned to each need not be unreasonably enlarged, inasmuch as the surplus can be gathered into the common room until teachers are provided.

Sometimes a class in the school proper dwindles down to two or three, and the form could comfortably accommodate six. If the reduction has been from any cause not within the teacher's control, (as death, or the removal of the family to another part of the town or into the country,) the ranks are filled up from the common stock. But if the class has diminished in consequence of the teacher's irregularity or incompetency, or of his not visiting the absentees, he is expected to bestir himself and obtain recruits from the streets and alleys.

By the above or some other method, a wise super-

intendent will protect his classes from fluctuating in numbers, and will, especially, avoid any needless infringement of the relation of teacher and pupil when once permanently formed.

§ 5. *Number and length of school-sessions.*

The general principles of organization which we have stated are, of course, subject to various modifications. In the country, for example, where the same conveyance that brings families to attend upon public worship brings their children to the Sunday-school, the time and length of school-sessions must conform to circumstances. Oftentimes not more than an hour, or at best an hour and a half, between the public services, can be had for Sunday-school duties; and if the whole of this period is faithfully devoted to the purposes of instruction, beginning punctually, curtailing introductory services and avoiding any interruptions of the legitimate business of teaching, we may be satisfied with it.

The conversion of the ordinary public service of the afternoon into a Sunday-school exercise has been sometimes urged. We have not yet seen a scheme for conducting such an exercise that seemed likely to obviate the chief objections to it, or to accomplish the benefits proposed by it. Experiments which involve the abandonment of established religious habits should be very cautiously tried. We should look well to the consequences; for if the substitution of a Sunday-school service for the ordinary season of public worship should fail, it would be very difficult to re-establish pre-existing habits. (Note VI.)

This may be the most fitting connection in which to

refer to the general subject of the number and length of Sunday-school sessions. Opinions on this point will be governed very much by the views that are held of the design and importance of the institution itself. Those who look upon it as the chief reliance of the church for the increase of her numbers, and the chief agency for diffusing the knowledge of moral and religious truth among the masses of the community, will be likely to regard with favour the longest time that can be consistently asked, and the most conscientious and skilful employment of every moment of it. It must be admitted that the present aspect of the religious world does not seem to favour a relaxation of any well-directed efforts to spread the knowledge of Scripture truth and to bring the mind of each successive generation fully under its power. The systematic exclusion of religious teaching from most of the public schools of the country, confining the pupils in them six hours daily for five days in a week to secular instruction, has thrown upon Sunday-schools, to a great extent, the duty of supplying the religious element.

Hundreds of thousands of children and youth who have no Bible-teaching at home, and none at the public school, will be dependent, in a great measure, on the Sunday-school for whatever they receive. Instead, therefore, of abridging their opportunities, it would seem to be the very time to enlarge and extend them. The "call" seems to be loud and yet louder "on the unemployed talent of the church" "to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Instead of looking about to see how a partial retreat can be secured, it would rather seem to be a duty to buckle

on our armour and address ourselves with new energy to the work which is given us to do.

It has been objected that the occupation of so large a portion of the Lord's day in teaching and in attendance on public worship renders it a day of fatigue instead of a day of rest; and that by the multiplication of these outward services opportunities for private and personal religious duties are injuriously abridged. So far as this objection can be justly urged, it is entitled to much weight. If the duties of the sanctuary or of the Sunday-school cannot be properly discharged without encroaching upon the time needed for the reading of Holy Scripture, meditation and prayer, it is obvious that our time-table needs revision.

Our city Sunday-schools usually open at 9 A.M. and at 2 or 2½ P.M. Suppose six o'clock to be the hour for rising, and one hour to be consumed by closet and family worship and breakfast: there are two hours left for reading and meditation. Public worship being over by twelve, an hour or two can be found at this interval for the purposes named; and then after afternoon service five or six hours are at the teacher's disposal, allowing eight hours for sleep. The most we can charge upon the Sunday-school as a consumer of holy time is three hours, or less than one-fifth of our time awake. Public worship takes another fifth, and the remaining three-fifths—say ten full hours—are left for meals, needful exercise and the private and indispensable duties of Scripture-reading, meditation and prayer. It does not seem to us, therefore, that any neglect of these duties is necessarily involved in the ordinary claims of the sanctuary and the Sunday-school;

and we need not say to how great an extent these very duties are embraced in the exercises of the class and of public worship. (Note VII.)

As to the manner of occupying the time of a second session, much will depend on circumstances. It is the practice of many teachers to employ the morning session in the thorough instruction of the class in a Scripture lesson, while the afternoon session is devoted to reviewing, illustrating and enforcing what had been taught in the morning; and it is a rare thing to find a pupil absent from the second session who has been present at the first. Indeed, it might be said that the first session was employed in ascertaining what the class knew, and the second in telling them how to use their knowledge. There are purposes enough to which a second session could be appropriated, without teaching from the question or text book. The examination of the pupils in the library-books they have read, and a proper distribution of other books suited to the capacity and state of mind of the various members of the class, &c., instead of the indiscriminate scattering of a library that prevails in many schools, would legitimately occupy a portion of the time. We can only say, generally, that due variety in the exercises is necessary in all schools to keep the attention of children from flagging and a teacher from becoming dull and prosy.

We advert with pleasure to a discussion of this question which took place not long since in a meeting of the New York Sunday-School Teachers' Association, —a body of as active, earnest and intelligent Christian men and women as the country can produce. It was decided, with scarcely a dissenting voice, in favour of two

sessions. One of the oldest and most laborious superintendents expressed his alarm at the bare suggestion of the inquiry whether two sessions were desirable.

He was convinced, from his thirty years' experience as superintendent and teacher, that "one session a day would be the *death-knell* of Sunday-schools in this city."

Said he, "My own age is such, and my business engagements so numerous and responsible,"—his wealth and business were known to be very large,—"that if almost any one might with propriety plead 'overworked,' I might do so; and yet I frankly acknowledge that I find no more difficulty, year in and year out, in devoting three hours to two sessions of the Sabbath-school, and three to the church-service, twice each Sabbath, than I do daily in attending six or eight hours to my business pursuits. In fact, I find relief and relaxation in the change." These sentiments were thought to be worthy of record at the time.

During the discussion, it was reported that one of the prominent churches of New York, which three years before had a flourishing school of three hundred pupils, had dwindled to less than one hundred, and that the reduction commenced with the discontinuance of the morning session. Other similar cases were stated.

Says an experienced teacher, "Our most systematic and faithful brethren, with some exceptions, can find six hours for church and Sunday-school, eight hours for sleep, two for refreshment, and two more, if needed, for relaxation, (if the change do not supply it sufficiently,) with three more for private devotion, and three for family instruction and Christian intercourse, in the twenty-four hours of the blessed Sabbath of

sacred rest,—rest, not of inglorious ease, but rest, in so far as circumstances correspond, like unto and emblematical of that eternal Sabbath where they rest not, day or night, forever."

Whatever may be determined in regard to the number or length of sessions, it is clearly important not to crowd more services into them than can be profitably performed. There should always be time given for the orderly and serious discharge of every duty of each hour of the day.

§ 6. *Distribution of teaching-power.*

The troop of children being arranged in classes, with suitable regard to uniformity of age, stature, capacity and attainments, one of the most perplexing duties of a superintendent is so to distribute the teaching-power as to give to each class the largest measure of care, instruction and sympathy which he can command for it. If he has no personal knowledge of the qualifications of persons offering themselves as teachers, he must resort to such tests as the case admits. It is injudicious to set over a class a teacher not much older in fact or in appearance than some of its members. There should be sufficient maturity of personal character to command respect. A godly man or woman may lack some of the essential characteristics of a teacher of children which a person of unexceptionable deportment without an open profession of faith may possess. Some classes of disorderly boys are docile under a female teacher; and female classes sometimes improve most under a male teacher.

It has been a frequent subject of debate whether any

person should be employed as a Sunday-school teacher who is not by profession a disciple of Christ. Those who advocate their employment, provided they are in all respects competent, derive one of their arguments from the divine approbation which they think is indicated by the large proportion of such teachers that find and embrace the Saviour while in the discharge of their Sunday-school duties.

It has been objected to this view that it places the duty of teaching on a wrong basis, and seems to hold it out as a means to the conversion of the teacher,—which it assuredly never was intended to be.* We are not disposed to make light of any precautions and safeguards which may be deemed needful in religious dealing with the ductile minds and tender hearts of children. We would that all who undertake the responsible office of Sunday-school teaching were earnest and exemplary followers of the great Teacher sent from God. But we are not prepared to say that it is any perversion of "the duty of teaching" to use it as an instrument of acquiring knowledge. We apprehend that the best teachers in all departments of science will acknowledge themselves largely indebted for the knowledge they possess to their labours in teaching others. There is certainly an inconsistency in the position a teacher occupies who is enjoining duties upon a pupil which are at least equally obligatory on himself, but which he is not prepared to discharge; and perhaps this view may have led some to maintain that none but *spiritual* worshippers should attend a place of public worship,

* Scotch Sabbath-School Teacher's Magazine, vol. i. p. 167.

on the ground that the services are an expression of gracious emotions already *in existence*, and should not be used to excite them. We are not aware that the conversion of parents is proposed as one of the ends to be accomplished by means of the Sunday-school; and yet it is oftentimes a result of the attendance of their children. And the fact that thousands of teachers have been brought to a saving knowledge of Christ after entering upon that duty, may be used, not, indeed, as an argument in favour of employing irreligious persons in the office, but to show that the position is favourable to their spiritual improvement, inasmuch as multitudes have obtained for themselves the pearl of great price while assisting others to find it.

It is further urged that it is extremely perilous to the soul of the child to intrust its spiritual interests to one who does not practically understand the gospel himself, who may therefore have the most erroneous notions regarding what it is, and who can feel very little interest in the salvation of his scholars. "Have we a right," it is asked, "to risk the child's soul for the sake of that of the teacher?" There can be but one answer to such a question. If there is reasonable ground to believe that any risk to the child's soul is involved, the experiment should by no means be tried. But very "erroneous notions regarding what the gospel is" are entertained by teachers who have made a profession of religion; and many who have made no such profession have very clear and correct notions of religious doctrine and duty; and though a public profession is a token to the world of a conversion to the Christian faith, it is not a perfect criterion by which to determine the fitness of a person

to take charge of a class in a Sunday-school. We have known persons of whose piety no one could doubt, deterred from an open profession of their faith by a morbid fear of presumption or insincerity, the value of whose services in the Sunday-school it would not be easy to match; and, on the other hand, we have known persons whose piety was scarcely discernible when separated from their profession, and whose influence as religious teachers of the young was, in every point of view, unhappy.

We should not feel justified in committing a Sunday-school child to one whom we believe to be ignorant of the plan of salvation or to have erroneous notions of it, or to be little interested in the spiritual welfare of the pupil. Nor, on the other hand, should we regard a profession of religion as a certain pledge that the teacher practically understands the gospel or has no erroneous notions regarding what it is, or that he feels a proper interest in the salvation of his scholars.

It has been said that, while the instances in which teachers have been converted in Sunday-schools are remembered and recorded, no one can tell how many have been hardened into utter irreligion, of whose cases no record is preserved. In the absence of any positive evidence of such a disastrous influence, and in view of the multiplied trophies of grace which have been taken from the ranks of teachers not professing religion at the time of their engagement, is it presumptuous to suppose that the suggested hardening process is very rare? We do not admit the analogy which has been sometimes asserted between "irreligious ministers of the gospel and Sunday-school teachers

who are not professors of religion." Indeed, the offices are not in this point at all analogous. The minister professes to have a distinct, special call to the sacred office. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." The Sunday-school teacher has no other call to his office than that which prompts to any other charitable duty,—as giving alms, visiting the sick, or reading the Scriptures to the ignorant. That few "irreligious ministers" are converted during their ministry, would not prove that many Sunday-school teachers may not become interested in the subject of religion, though comparatively ignorant and indifferent when they entered on their work. Besides, by no light but that of the last day will it be revealed how many ministers of the gospel have commenced their labours with hearts "not right in the sight of God," and have been led, at some time and by some agency known only to themselves, to embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, while preaching it to others.

We are inclined to think, therefore, that the following rule on the subject is, on the whole, open to as few objections as any that can be laid down,—viz.: That a profession of religion is desirable in every religious teacher; but when an *intelligent, well-informed person of unexceptionable character and conduct pledges himself to discharge the duties of a teacher*, it is no sufficient reason for declining his services that he is not a professor; and, on the other hand, if a professor of religion proposes himself as a teacher, and there is reason to apprehend that he would prove deficient in some of the essential qualifications or duties of the office, his services should be declined notwithstanding

he sustains a visible, and perhaps real, relation to the people of God.

Few superintendents can be so fully acquainted with the composition of the several classes and the qualifications of each teacher as to be able to determine positively and at once how to fit them, one to the other. We have known cases in which age alone ruled,—the oldest teacher being appointed to the oldest class, and the youngest to the youngest class. It would be scarcely less judicious to make stature or rank the rule. Over a class of boys or girls who have had liberal advantages at school and are accustomed to the society of well-educated people, a teacher of little cultivation would be likely to have no great influence; though cases may occur in which winning manners and warm piety may more than compensate for the absence of intellectual endowments. On the other hand, the time and strength of a well-educated and eminently spiritual teacher may be comparatively wasted upon an alphabet-class of girls or a group of unruly boys, whom it will take weeks or months to bring into a state of teachableness. The task of the superintendent is so to adjust the connection of his teachers with the several classes as to secure for each the best service he can command.

The most perfectly organized school will fall into disorder and decay unless there is due subordination to constituted authority and due regard to established rules. As one rebellious child will mar the peace of a family, so one insubordinate pupil can do much to defeat the best efforts of a good teacher, and one disorderly class can deform and disturb the best-arranged school. And hence the necessity of a system of discipline

which shall secure the peace and good order of the school and a due regard to the sacred day and its appointments.

It is out of the question to teach with much comfort or profit in a noisy and disorderly school; and yet it is rare to find one in which unnecessary noise and disorder do not prevail.

§ 7. *The reception of new pupils.*

Among the remote causes of such evils as we have named, we cannot but regard the loose manner in which the relations of pupils to a Sunday-school are formed and changed or dissolved. Whether it is that the attendance of both teachers and children is voluntary, and so they are impatient of regulations, or whether the personal intercourse of the parties concerned is so unfrequent and for so brief a period as to make rules of discipline seem out of place, we know not; but much of the good which might be derived from the Sunday-school is sacrificed to the precarious and casual tenure by which both teachers and pupils are held to it.

Would that it were in our power to impress upon the minds of teachers the importance of little things in their intercourse with children! First impressions made upon their sensitive natures are seldom obliterated, and oftentimes endure through a long life.

Upon the manner of receiving a pupil much of the teacher's future influence over him may depend. There is a stiff, formal, lordly way of recognising a boy or girl as a new scholar, and indicating with a motion of the hand or a nod of the head what seat is to be taken; and it is always remembered. And there is a kind, winsome smile, or a pressure of the little hand or a

smoothing of the hair, which is never forgotten. The language of a superintendent's or teacher's countenance and manner should express gratitude that God is pleased to intrust to his care another precious jewel to set, by his grace, for the Master's crown.

At the close as well as at the commencement of a teacher's personal connection with a pupil, much depends on casual impressions. To receive a pupil coldly into the class is virtually to repress the confidence and sympathy which are so invaluable to our success; and to dismiss him without regret, or anxiety, or any future inquiry after him, is to belie our professions of interest in his welfare.

A little token of love—a hymn, or verse-book, or pocket Testament, with the teacher's autograph, accompanied with a few affectionate words—may have a marvellous influence in directing the current of a whole life. The practice of corresponding with pupils after they have left the school has been found very useful; and teachers who have employed it to any considerable extent have reaped a harvest which would repay a life of labour. Of course it is impracticable for some teachers to adopt such a method; but when the opportunity offers it should be eagerly embraced.

A teacher in a British Sunday-school who afterwards became a preacher of the gospel tells us of a class of girls which he once had under his care, one of whom was particularly attentive and apparently under deep conviction of sin. She left the school and went out to service, and he had no means of communicating with her. It so happened that he accidentally learned that she had given up all religious ideas and feelings. He

corresponded with her; and in her reply she made use of a most extraordinary expression:—"When I attended your class," she said, "I loved the Sabbath, the Bible, the Sunday-school and prayer; but I have given them all up, and now I am going to hell;—*and I don't care!*" This expression made him feel that she did care; and he sat down and wrote her as earnest a letter as he could. He heard no more of her for some time. The first sermon that he preached, he saw her before him! He had no communication further with her until he heard she had applied for admission to the church. She then told him that though his letter was not the direct means of her conversion, yet after she had read it she laid it open in her trunk, so that whenever she got any thing out of it the letter lay before her as a testimony for God. It worked, however, upon her mind; and the sermon that he preached that day became the turning-point. She became a most excellent Christian woman, and for the last ten or fifteen years had been adorning the doctrine of the gospel.

The consequences which often attach to the manner of receiving and dismissing a pupil have often been illustrated; and we have a case within our personal knowledge which is pertinent and instructive.

Mr. W., a large manufacturer in this country, visited England some years since, chiefly for the purpose of once more returning to the place, in Dorsetshire, in which he attended Sunday-school in 1804. He was there two years, and when he left received a copy of Watts's Psalms and Hymns, and a New Testament with the superintendent's name inscribed as the giver, on the fly-leaf.

He was very reluctant to go to school; but his mother commanded it, and her will was law to him. He approached the school-house door unhappy and pouting; but the superintendent met him at the door, and, patting him gently on the head, said, "Ah, my son, when we are better acquainted we shall love each other."—And they did. The New Testament which he received upon leaving the school he took with him, often recurring with pleasure to the autograph which it contained. It was his companion in many cities and towns of Europe and in long journeys and voyages, and ultimately became the means of enlightening the mind of an ignorant Papist in a remote island of the sea. His attachment to the school to which he had been so kindly welcomed and in which he had passed many happy hours, strengthened with advancing years and has never sensibly abated.

We need not say how different would have been the result if the reluctant pupil had been coldly received, and his indisposition had been strengthened and confirmed by the repulsive, austere deportment of the superintendent and teachers.

CHAPTER II.

DISCIPLINE, OR CLASS-ORDER.

THE maintenance of quiet and order in every class is essential to any proper improvement as well as to the general character and success of the school. We can scarcely conceive that any intelligent man or woman needs to be told that a disorderly school is neither a pleasant nor profitable place in which to spend two or three hours of the Sabbath. Those who are accustomed to subordination and quiet at home are made worse by attending; and those who need restraint and discipline are made no better. The whole tendency of such a school is to make sacred times, subjects and associations any thing but agreeable and edifying. No wise and watchful parent would suffer a child to attend there, nor would a discerning community desire the continuance of such a moral nuisance.

If it should be said that good instruction may be given in disorderly schools, and that souls may be and indeed have been converted to the faith and obedience of the gospel in them, we should reply that God is a God of order, and not of confusion, and that though he may use a disorderly Sunday-school (as he uses a wicked man) to accomplish his sovereign purposes, we are not thence to infer that wickedness and confusion are the same in his sight as holiness and order. No

one can enter a quiet, well-organized, well-disciplined Sunday-school without being impressed with the immeasurable advantages it offers for instilling and enforcing the precepts and duties of religion. The subdued and serious aspect of the whole scene fills the visitor with a consciousness that the interests involved are of more than ordinary importance.

Would any considerate teacher be willing to mar the beauty or disturb the harmony of such a school? Would he be willing to go into it with a noisy, unruly, careless class of boys, and occupy a form among those whose character and conduct would be a constant and severe reproof to him and his pupils?

Now, what makes an orderly school, but the aggregate of the order of the several classes? As one perverse child destroys the peace and happiness of a whole family, so one disorderly pupil deranges a class, and one irregular class disorders the whole school.

Probably some teachers have a very low standard of order. Their eyes do not readily catch the motions in which disorder begins. Perhaps they are far from being themselves followers of quiet and order. If they are impatient and restless, if they speak loud or make a clatter in moving a chair, opening a drawer, or taking up or laying aside books, the pupils will soon imitate their ways. Or if the teacher only suffers little acts of disorder to creep into the class without checking, or even observing them, the evil will grow (would that it perished also!) like a mushroom, and before the teacher is aware of it, his class is marked by the neighbours, and possibly by all, as a source of irreparable evils to the school.

What is worth doing at all is worth doing well. Were we in conference with a teacher on this point we would say—You surely have not embarked in the business of a religious teacher without any concern whether you succeed or fail; nor do you wish to defeat or embarrass the efforts of others with whom you are associated in this labour of love. The end you profess to have in view, and that for which the school is established, will be but imperfectly, if at all, attained without strict discipline and invariable order. This cannot be had without your concurrence and co-operation; and hence, if, upon a fair trial of your powers, you should ascertain that whatever other good qualities you possess, the maintenance of order and subordination in your class is not one of them, you had better forego the privilege of teaching children in Sunday-school, and find some other post, where the good qualities you possess can be brought into exercise, and those which you lack will not be so much missed.

If you think a little more care and attention will enable you to maintain order in your class, by all means apply them. And let your aim be not so much to correct overt irregularities as to obviate the more remote causes of them. Your own punctuality is of great importance. Never let two or more of your class be before you in coming to the school. The foul spirit of disorder sometimes takes possession of a few members of the class before the teacher comes, and keeps possession through the whole session. (Note VIII.)

Do not fail to insist on exact punctuality in the attendance of your pupils. The same interruptions which disturb the exercises of the class—such as

coming in after and going out before the appointed time, mistaking or neglecting the lesson, inattention, levity, or rude and careless postures—disturb the whole school. The comfort and success of every other teacher are in some measure in your keeping. A timely rebuke of one tardy pupil in a class of ten may prevent the formation of tardy habits in the other nine, and may effectually dry up a fountain of disorder which would otherwise flow over the whole school.

It is in the discipline of a class as in the preservation of health: every thing depends on applying a remedy in season. Disease itself, when once fixed, may be difficult to eradicate; but *tendencies* to disease are more easily counteracted; and as many a man is indebted (under Providence) for a long life to instant and watchful care, so the preservation of order and discipline in a school or class is best secured by duly noticing and carefully suppressing the first tendencies to irregularity.

It is very desirable that all causes or occasions of playfulness, restlessness and irritation should be avoided,—lounging, gaping, laughing, drumming with the fingers or toes, swinging the feet, or playing with books or caps. Parents and daily teachers who are striving to correct these habits in children are often thwarted for want of the co-operation of the Sunday-school teacher. If those who sit next to each other in the form are disposed to play, or talk, or tease each other, their position should be changed. An orderly class is a double blessing to a school, and receives a double blessing from it.

In teaching some two or three hundred children in

the same room, there is, of necessity, considerable noise, though each one who is speaking may use a very low tone of voice. If two or three raise their voices a little above the general level, it will be likely to make the whole school, unconsciously, rise to the same pitch. And if any one speaks immoderately loud, the rest must, in self-defence, (to prevent having their own voices drowned,) use a louder tone. The hum which in a well-regulated school greets the ear of a visitor is not a disturber of the teachers' work. If there were only two or three classes in a room, it would be difficult for them not to overhear each other. But where a large number of classes are taught simultaneously in the same apartment, and none are allowed to speak above the common range or pitch which good order and quiet will allow, no question, nothing in the class, is unheard, and nothing out of the class is overheard: so that, in arranging forms by classes, care should be taken that the position of each teacher and each individual of his class is such that, with the allowed pitch of the voice, every one in his class can hear and be heard.

We were once in a large and flourishing school in one of our Northern cities, and were much impressed with the importance of this rule. It was held in the audience room of the church. We were seated in a pew nearest the door of the side entrance, and could survey the whole body. In a remote part of the church, diagonally opposite to us, were seated a large class of young men, occupying two pews. The teacher was standing in another pew in front of them; and, instead of leaning forward and speaking with his eye almost as

much as with his voice, he stood bolt upright and poured out a stream of fervid exhortation, most of which was as audible in any part of the church as the ordinary pulpit performance. Near us was another teacher, evidently very competent and devoted, but, unfortunately, deaf; and the voices of the young women whom he was faithfully instructing were raised very much, in order that they might be heard. These high voices were distinguished above the general jargon, and must have greatly annoyed every neighbouring teacher.

At the close of the school, on the same occasion, a letter was read from a missionary of the American Sunday-School Union, in the West, to whose support the contributions of the school were appropriated. It was read in so low a tone, and so indistinctly, that the classes in a remote part of the room could only catch now and then a word; and of course they fell into much irregularity, and disturbed those who were straining their ears to hear. It was altogether a scene which we should prefer not to witness a second time.

The good order of a class depends much on the degree of confidence and respect which is felt for the teacher. Hence the danger of allowing the idea to prevail that we can say any thing that is not worthy of their attention, or do any thing that is not worthy of their imitation.

Constant occupation is a safeguard of order. A teacher was once asked how it was that he could maintain such order and attention in his class. He replied *that he never gave them time to be disorderly.*

A skilful teacher can usually supply employment to

his pupils, so that there will be rare occasion for those two very little but (to children) very irritating words,—*must not.*

A child once said, "I like very well to be told what to do by those who are fond of me; but never to be told what *not to do;* and the more fond they are of me, the less I like it; because, when they tell me what to do, they give me an opportunity of pleasing them; but when they tell me what not to do, it is a sign I have displeased, or am likely to displease, them."

There are many good people who are most anxious to teach their children aright. They are crowding their daily path with prohibitions, but seldom hold out a hand to help them or point out to them the steps they may safely take. "And while they are always teaching them that they must *not* break the Sabbath, wiser parents are teaching their children how they may keep it pleasantly and profitably. The Sabbath is to the former a day on which they *must not* play with their balls, carts, and so on,—a day on which they *must not* work in their garden, *must not* read their story-books. To the latter it is a day on which they may sing hymns with mother,—on which they may hear father read stories out of the Bible so long as they please,—on which they may seek out answers to questions, and have longer talks with father and mother about all their little trials and faults,—on which they get more comfort and help than on any other day of the week. To them it is a day of privileges; to the others, a day of prohibitions."*

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* A little volume, entitled "Sunday all the Week," furnishes very valuable hints on this subject.

There is great danger of making children feel that religion is a system of "*must nots.*" It is very right to tell children that they "must not quarrel with each other,' must not' be anxious to keep every thing to themselves, must never be glad to bring another into disgrace, must never tell tales of each others' faults; but we might draw a bright and pleasing picture of the pleasure of being kind, of the happiness of making another happy, or of being of use to a little brother, sister, or play-fellow. When we take that view of the subject, little drooping heads are raised, the sleepy eyes brighten, the wandering ones are fixed, and next Sabbath the little ones think the class is a place where they hear of the happiness of being Christ's lambs,—not as a place where they are told that they 'must not' do this or do that."

CHAPTER III.

INSTRUCTION.

1. *Manner of teaching.*

It has been well said that no man has a right to impose his method of teaching upon his neighbour; nor is a teacher wise who adopts another's method, to save himself the trouble of devising and working out a method of his own. The general principles of the art may be the same, but the manner of applying them may be very diverse. A true teacher is no imitator. He works according to the laws of his own mind, modified by what he alone knows of the operation of those laws in his own case. He who studies these laws most diligently and discriminately will be most likely to work in harmony with them in his attempts to teach.

No man can be a good teacher who is a cut-and-dried man without any particular character: his individuality must be strongly marked. He should be, of course, a man of unimpeachable integrity, detesting what is base or mean, and beyond every thing hating a lie. He should have pleasure in his work, be fond of children, and not think of looking down upon them, but put faith—and that is a main point which many teachers sadly overlook—put faith in the good spirit of childhood. He must honour a child, or he cannot educate it, though he may cram many facts into its head.

The teacher opposite to me in the Sunday-school is able, without an effort, to command the attention of his class for an hour or two. How is it? He does not study the lesson more than I do, nor has he been any longer engaged in teaching. Is it his voice, or his manner, or his way of presenting thoughts to their minds? In a word, is it any thing I can imitate with success? Probably not. My task is to study the laws of my own mind, to analyze the process by which its powers are excited and its cravings supplied, throw myself earnestly into the subject-matter of the lesson which I am to teach, and into sympathy with each of my class, and then, with a devout recognition of my dependence on the Infinite Source of all light and grace, give myself to the work.

For the good teacher must be devoted to his work. If he wants pleasure and excitement, he must find them in the school-room and the study. For it is only when his teaching gives great pleasure to himself that it can give any pleasure whatever to his pupils.

It is essential to the constitution of a good teacher that, whatever else he lacks, he shall be animated, or, at least, that he shall not be slow. Children are not so constituted as to be able to endure slowness patiently. He must not be destitute of imagination; for he will have quick imaginations to develope and to satisfy.

There is a sympathy which a devoted teacher, religious or secular, feels with his pupils, that has a magical influence in making the work of each not only easy, but delightful; and the glow of mutual affection and confidence which is thus engendered is diffused over all their intercourse. The testimony of a school-boy to the

attraction of this trait in the character of a teacher has been impressively given in the following passage from a recent popular work.*

"We couldn't enter into half that we heard; we hadn't the knowledge of our own hearts, or the knowledge of one another, and little enough of the faith, hope and love needed to that end; but we listened, as all boys in their better moods will listen (ay, and men too, for the matter of that,) to a man whom we felt to be with all his heart and soul and strength striving against whatever was mean and unmanly and unrighteous in our little world. It was not the cold, clear views of one giving advice and warning from serene heights to those who were struggling and sorrowing below, but the warm, loving voice of one who was fighting for us and by our sides, and calling on us to help him and ourselves and one another. And so, wearily and little by little, but surely and steadily on the whole, was brought home to the young boy, for the first time, the meaning of his life,—that it was no fools' or sluggards' paradise into which he had wandered by chance, but a battle-field ordained from of old, where there are no spectators, but the youngest must take his side, and the stakes are life and death. And he who roused this consciousness in them showed them at the same time, by every word he spoke and every deed he did, how that battle was to be fought, and stood there before them their fellow-soldier and the captain of their band. The true sort of a captain, too, for a boys' army,—one who had no misgivings and gave no uncertain word of command, and, let who would yield or

* "Tom Brown's School-Days at Rugby," p. 157.

make truce, would fight the fight out (so every boy felt) to the last gasp and the last drop of blood. Other sides of his character might influence boys here and there; but it was this thoroughness and undaunted courage which, more than any thing else, won his way to the hearts of the great mass of those on whom he left his mark and made them believe first in him and then in his Master."

Another element in the character of a successful Sunday-school teacher is strong faith in the power and promise of God to clothe his truth, when properly presented to the human mind, with divine power. It has been truly said that the future triumph of the church in this or any other country must depend greatly upon the conversion of the children of the nation to Christ *while in childhood.* We do not mean, necessarily, their becoming professors of religion while children, but their being thoroughly imbued with the knowledge of the principles and leading doctrines of our holy Protestant faith, and with a deep reverence for the ordinances and institutions of religion. To make our Sunday-schools efficient agents in the accomplishment of such a work, they claim that the church should have a firm faith in a child's susceptibility of converting grace, and that she should extend to them her hearty co-operation and sympathy. More than this the Sunday-school does not ask; and less than this the church can scarcely offer.

Many teachers labour from month to month and from year to year with a vague hope—sometimes scarcely distinct enough to be recognised—that in some mysterious way and at some unexpected and possibly

very remote time the fruit of their efforts will appear. Probably some scarcely think of results at all, but perform the routine of duties with a sort of mechanical exactness, like convicts on a tread-wheel. Now, to teach well, with spirit, with satisfaction to one's self or profit to a class, there must be a deep, settled conviction that the truth taught is "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" and that to persuade every pupil to believe, and to remove, as far as human agency can avail for that end, all hinderances to such faith, is the first and chief end to be sought in every exercise and every interview. While the delay of the promised blessing may *try* the teacher's faith, it should not weaken it. We are to *wait* as well as *teach* in faith, and to regard the fact that we are there to teach, and our class is there to be taught, as a token that God, the Holy Spirit, is there to bless his own truth and sanctify and save souls. It is literally and emphatically true that the sower of the seed does not and cannot know which particular grain shall germinate first, or grow most luxuriantly, or bear fruit most plenteously. One is appointed to sow and another to water; but only the Infinite One can give the increase; and all times and seasons are in his hands. The annals of Sunday-schools are full of encouragement to the humblest labourer in this department of Christ's service, and in selecting one out of the multitude of instances in which his blessing has been signally vouchsafed, we are careful to avoid such as might be regarded as extreme or unusual.

"The last class which it was my privilege to teach,

says one now gone to the world of glory, "was composed of the oldest girls in the school, and was called 'the teachers' class.' They were placed in this class, and instructed under the hope and expectation that they would be future teachers. Not one was professedly pious, and but one seriously inclined; but they were all well-educated, intelligent girls and had an unusually correct view of Scripture truth. It will be impossible for me to express the reluctance with which I consented to take charge of this interesting class, or the unfitness I was conscious of for the station; but my objections were overruled, and I became their teacher.

"To their credit I must record it, that their deportment was always such as to merit my warmest thanks. Their lessons were always carefully studied, and their attendance punctual,—while they listened to my instructions with an attention and seriousness worthy of a better teacher. But all this did not result in any such change in my dear pupils as I was greatly desiring and looking for. The prospect became more cheering, however; and the first young disciple from the number of those committed to my care was the very one whom I should have selected as the least likely to be affected by religious truth. Not that she was trifling or inattentive; but she was the least intelligent member of the class. She never asked me any questions about the lesson, and did not appear so much interested in my instructions as many of the others. But 'the wind bloweth where it listeth.' Hannah Bradley became the subject of the renewing grace of God, when I knew not that his Spirit was among us.

One Sabbath morning I was in the school-room early; but, although few had preceded me, Hannah was one of this number. She did not observe my entrance, and I took my usual seat unnoticed by her. Her open Bible was on her knee, her head resting upon her hand; and, as I turned towards her, I saw a tear fall upon the sacred page. A new hope sprang up in my heart, and, moving quietly towards her, I took her hand and said, in a low voice, 'Hannah, may I hope that these tears are tears of penitence,—perhaps tears of joy?'

"'I scarcely dare hope that I have cause for joy,' she replied; 'and yet I must say that my mind is now as the sea after a storm,—tossed, it is true, but not by the tempest. I never before knew what a wicked heart I have. I do not know why it is that the words of this Bible, which are so familiar to me, never before conveyed such impressions to my mind as now.'

"I had never before heard her speak as many words in one sentence on any subject, for she was a timid girl, retiring and quiet in her disposition; but now 'the string of her tongue was loosed,' and she seemed to speak 'out of the abundance of her heart,' 'as the Spirit gave her utterance.' Our conversation was brief; but to both it was deeply interesting. I expected that now I should be gladdened by finding others in my class imitating the example which their associate had set them. But I was disappointed. God's ways are not as our ways, neither are his thoughts as our thoughts. We have obvious duties to perform, and the divine blessing is promised upon the diligent use of means.

"It was nearly a year before another conversion oc-

curred in my class. At that time a revival of a most interesting character took place in the church of which I was a member. It was a revival of 'pure and undefiled religion,' free from fanaticism and extravagance, and as the fruits of it numbers were added to the church of such as, we have reason to believe, shall be saved. At this period, after the lapse of ten or twelve years, I have not heard of one who has not 'run well,' and many who have gone home to glory have departed, 'witnessing a good confession.'

"The solicitude I felt for those under my immediate charge will be well understood by every conscientious person similarly situated. Nor were my hopes disappointed; for in a few weeks five of the ten members composing my class gave evidence of having met with that change which is so appropriately denominated in Scripture a passing 'from death unto life.' My anxiety for the other five, whose hearts had remained unaffected, was greatly increased; but, while *those* were taken, *these* were left; for the harvest passed away, the revival-season ended, and these *were not saved!* In the course of the succeeding year, one of this number, my lovely young friend Mary, chose the better part; and my desires for the conversion of those who did not avail themselves of the offers of mercy increased in intensity as their numbers diminished. Four precious souls continued enemies to God, and were still so when the time arrived that I was to resign my charge and to bid farewell to these dearly-cherished objects of my prayers, my efforts and my love. My future home was to be far distant; but I left them under the care of one whom I felt to be far more com-

petent to instruct them than ever I had been, and received from her a promise that I should hear often through her from my beloved pupils. But, in the course of two or three years from this time, all who had been connected with this class while under my care left it, either to take their turn as teachers, or to remove to other portions of the country. Three of the remaining four have since that time yielded their hearts to that reasonable service which is perfect freedom. I know not that one of all this number attributed her first sound impressions to the instructions they received in the Sabbath-school. It is a question I never dared trust myself to ask, that boasting might be excluded. To God be all the glory.

"Ten years have now passed away, and all who composed my class are still among the living. I see or hear from most of them occasionally; and of the nine who gave themselves to the Lord, are all adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour. Two of them are the wives of ministers of the gospel, and are exerting an influence for good in the community where they reside. Two of them I know to be Sabbath-school teachers, and others are filling useful and responsible situations in life.

"But I have spoken of but nine. Where is the tenth who shared in my instructions? For some time I asked this question in vain. I heard that she left the class with unchanged feelings, and that she married; but for some time I remained ignorant of her place of residence. At length I heard that she was living in a community which had been noted for its devotion to gaiety and worldliness, but that this place was at that

time the scene of a revival of religion, and that many votaries of the world had listened to the voice of wisdom, and entered her ways, which are ways of pleasantness, and her paths, which are paths of peace.

"'Is Maria of this number?' I eagerly inquired of my narrator.

"'Alas! she is not; and what renders this the more to be lamented is the fact that she is the subject of a disease which it is feared will be attended with fatal results; but she is the same gay, heedless creature that she was when you knew her.'

"'Oh that I could see her once more!' I exclaimed. 'She was a motherless girl, and I was her Sabbath-school teacher.' I had always felt deeply interested in her spiritual welfare, but could never enlist her feelings. I felt as if I must make one more effort to do her good,—that I must expostulate with her once more. 'Who will do so,' thought I, 'if her former teacher does not? She will perhaps listen to the voice that in years past so often besought her to remember her Creator in the days of her youth.' Then the painful thought arose in my mind, perhaps I had been less faithful to her than I was to some of the others! Was I sure I was guiltless if that soul was, at the last, found among the lost? I hesitated no longer, but, without further delay, addressed to her a letter, in which I endeavoured affectionately to call her attention to those all-important subjects which involved her eternal well-being. I told her that *now*, even at so late an hour, while the Spirit of God was calling one and another of her associates into the kingdom, *now* was an acceptable time for her to secure her

soul's salvation. In short, I said all that affectionate solicitude and deep anxiety for her dangerous condition could prompt one to say, and I besought her to reply to my letter; but I grieve to say that I never yet have received intelligence, from her or any one else, whether my letter ever reached her. All I could do for her was to commend her to God, who is able to renew the heart, and whose grace alone gives us a place among those who are sanctified.

"'When, soon or late, we reach that coast,
O'er life's rough ocean driven,
May we rejoice, *no wanderer lost*,
But all be safe in heaven!'"

§ 2. *What instruction is.*

It is not within the scope of the present volume to enter into the details of teaching, but rather to treat of general principles, and leave the application of them to be determined by the good sense of the individual teacher, in the endless and various circumstances of a school or class.

This term, *instruction*, when applied to the proceedings in Sunday-school, is very comprehensive. From the moment a child takes his seat on the form till he passes out of the door when dismissed, he is all the time under instruction. The hymn, the prayer, the Scripture-reading, the teacher's voice and manner, the general conduct of the whole school, are all concerned in the instruction of every child. Whatever makes an impression on his mind, good or bad,—whatever influences his conduct, excites thought or passion, weakens or strengthens habits, or inclines him

to good or evil courses,—is as much part of the instruction of the hour as is the direct teaching or exhortation. But if we limit the term to its ordinary acceptation, viz., the direct inculcation of knowledge, we need to consider well its import.

The theory of the Sunday-school supposes the teacher to have a mind and heart thoroughly imbued with divine truth to have felt its regenerating, sanctifying and saving efficacy as a matter of personal experience, and to desire, as a testimony of love and gratitude to the Saviour, to bring as many as possible to believe on Him, and so receive power to become the sons of God. The field selected for the work is, as we have seen, a most inviting one, though it presents many peculiar difficulties and discouragements. The heedlessness, frivolity and impatience of control which are characteristic of childhood, the complete occupation of the mind with the things of time and sense, and the disposition to regard some ever-future period of life as more favourable to religious concerns than the present, are familiar to us all. But the office of the teacher is plain and simple. Christ and His cross must be all his theme,—salvation, eternal salvation; the soul's endless and inconceivable bliss, secured by the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the grand subject of instruction. To this every other topic must give place. To illustrate and enforce this, every exercise of the day must tend. To set before the child's mind the evil of sin, its odiousness in the sight of our heavenly Father, the beauty of holiness, the blessedness of being forever with the Lord, and the claim of the Saviour to the love, trust and worship of

those he died to save,—this is the serious and responsible task which the Sunday-school teacher is supposed to undertake. The mere enumeration of these chief duties may well extort the exclamation, "Who is sufficient for so momentous a work?" He that "leans to his own understanding" in such an exigency "is a fool." All our sufficiency is of God, whose strength is made perfect in our weakness. "What I have to do, then," says the right-minded teacher, upon taking his seat among a group of boys or girls, "is to place before them as simply and attractively as possible the plain truths which I find revealed in Holy Scripture and which have been made to me 'the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation.' Whatever means are within my reach for qualifying myself for this heavenly service, I will gladly employ, and will never fail or falter in my work, nor relinquish it till I have fully proved the Lord, if he will bestow his promised blessing."

One of the most important general directions on the subject of instruction is, that the pupil's mind should be put in such a position as not only to receive the right impression of the truth, but that it shall be as deep as human skill can make it. This may sometimes be done at the moment; but, generally, the teacher must have time to study the lesson in order to bring his own mind under the impression which he would produce on the minds of others. Suppose the passage to be the very remarkable statement of the Apostle Paul,—1 Tim. i. 16,—"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them

which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

It would be very natural and very proper for the teacher in this case to remind his class of the long-suffering of God displayed, not only in allowing bad men to live, but in oftentimes converting the very worst to himself. "You see," he might say, "the apostle speaks of the mercy shown to him as very wonderful; and he tells us that one reason of this was that none might be deterred from seeking mercy because of the number or heinousness of their sins. If the persecuting, blaspheming Saul found grace and salvation, who need despair?" An attentive, reflective pupil might appreciate the force of this truth. But there might be so strong an impression of the greatness of the apostle, and of his holy and exalted character as a servant of Jesus Christ, that this display of divine mercy in *his* behalf would not seem so very wonderful. It would therefore be perfectly legitimate for the teacher to spend a few moments in attempting to put the class in a position to realize it. There is the great and beautiful and busy city of Damascus. A defenceless band of the disciples of Jesus are found there. They have heard that a party, headed by a man of great power and influence, are on their way thither, clothed with full authority to seize, bind and carry away all who can be found, men or women, who have attached themselves to this new sect, and that they will soon be there. They can expect nothing but suffering, torture and death at their hands. It is near mid-day, and the party, bent on their cruel mission, draw nigh to the city. Every strange footstep awakens apprehension. An hour

passes, and another; but nothing unusual is heard or seen. Soon a rumour reaches them of a wonderful event having happened a short distance from the city. The furious persecutor and blasphemer has been suddenly arrested in his career by the direct interposition of the power of God, and has already been led into the city, totally blind, a convinced, penitent, subdued disciple of Jesus of Nazareth! And in order to impress the pupil with the force of the apostle's argument that, in selecting him as an early object of divine mercy under the new dispensation, it was intended to furnish a pattern or sample to all future generations of the long-suffering and goodness of God in dealing with even the chief of sinners, the supposition would be allowable of a king or governor who, to encourage all offenders to seek for pardon on prescribed terms, should select the most notorious and hardened as the first object of clemency. Such a use of similitudes often serves to bring a transaction into the ordinary current of human affairs which otherwise would seem to be remote and isolated.

As we have said in another connection, there is perhaps no one thing to which the failure of teachers may be more often attributed than the want of a *definite object*. We do many things which are indispensable to bring about a certain result, without any distinct reference to result. We eat and sleep, and both are necessary to our health and life; and yet we seldom have that end in view when we go to the table or lie down on the bed. Not so if a house or a ship is to be built. The design is present to the mind from the first. The image of the complete house, with the conveniences

and comforts it affords to the occupants, or of the ship, freighted with millions of treasure, gliding gallantly over the deep waters, is before the architect, and serves to guide and animate his labours. So with the Sunday-school teacher. Means and appliances are at hand which he needs for the accomplishment of his work. He is supposed to understand their use; but he cannot employ them with any advantage unless he has a distinct conception of the end which they are designed to accomplish. Here is a creature before me, fearfully and wonderfully made. The breath of the Almighty has given him being and inspired him with understanding. His existence, begun in weakness and sin here, is never to end. Two paths are before him,—one narrow but safe, and leading to life eternal; the other attractive and broad, ending in a fathomless abyss of darkness. I am to persuade him, if possible, to enter upon the former and shun the latter. He is surrounded by influences, most of them adverse to his true interest. I am to ascertain what these adverse influences are, and try to counteract them. He has within him an evil heart of unbelief. I must try to convince him of this, and to show him how he may obtain a better one. To know my pupil, I must study myself; for "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

I have a revelation of the divine will in respect to my duty; and it informs me of the only method or provision by which this immortal creature before me is to obtain God's favour. Surely I must take heed to it as to a light shining in a dark place; and the grand absorbing purpose of all my plans and efforts must be

to lead this child, at the earliest possible period of its life, to embrace and hold fast the hope of everlasting life through Jesus Christ.

There is an important department of instruction which Sunday-school teachers are apt to overlook. We mean the *religious habits and manners of their pupils.* Nothing, perhaps, is more unpropitious to the formation of religious character than the irreverence for sacred things which pervades a large class of children, especially in our populous towns. There is abundant evidence of the care with which, under the old dispensation, sacred things were protected from desecration; and there is true philosophy in the maxim that "familiarity breeds contempt."

Reverence is a natural emotion, and consists with all the characteristics of childhood. The Lord's day may be reverenced in a household, and yet a spirit of cheerfulness and joy pervade every hour and occupation. The place of religious instruction or worship may be reverenced without any approach to gloom or superstition. Reverence for the Scriptures as a revelation from God would seem to be as natural as respect for age or love to a benefactor. The manner of children in going to and from Sunday-school is a matter of no little moment. There is a quiet, subdued feeling which cannot fail to be produced by associations of the day if they are allowed their proper influence. The general abstinence from worldly labour, and the devotion of the hours to religious duties, distinguish this from all other days; and, while we would clothe it with all legitimate attractions, we should insist upon its being "remembered to be kept holy." It would

not be difficult to convince most children of from six to twelve years of age of the reasonableness of this requirement, and to accustom them to make such a difference in their mode of passing the day as should meet it. In many Sunday-schools the association of the day, the place, the text-book, or the teaching with the service of God or the duties of religion never seems to have entered the minds of the pupils. The careless, thoughtless manner in which they come to the school and to their seat is scarcely laid aside till they rush out again and join in the boisterous mirth of the street. How often is the entrance of the Sunday-scholars into a church a scene of confusion and noise! And who has not witnessed with pain the exchange of winks and nods between even the older children in the school during the most solemn services of the sanctuary? What apology can be found for the reading of books and newspapers in the time and place of public worship? And yet it is done under the eye of intelligent parents who profess to be the disciples of Christ, and with the knowledge of teachers who do not seem to think it their duty to reprove, and if possible, suppress the practice!

A just apprehension of the tendency of these habits to blunt any sensibility to spiritual things, and to prepare the child's mind to cast off wholesome fear and to treat with contempt the requirements and ordinances of religion, would perhaps excite teachers to more diligence in attending to them before they acquire indomitable strength. It cannot be too deeply impressed on their minds that the *whole* character of a pupil is necessarily moulded by them, and that nothing is out of their

province which can affect his moral or religious interests, unless it is beyond their control.

It is a great matter to beget in our scholars the conviction that "our holy faith is not a sort of excitement for Sundays, but a living thing, to leaven our every thought and word and deed, and that our ordinary work may be made acceptable worship. Let us illustrate and enforce our meaning by appealing to the acts with which they are daily conversant; let us show them that in the running of an errand, the writing of a copy, the hemming of a handkerchief, the lighting of a fire, or the nursing of an infant, there is as much room for the exercise of the essential Christian spirit as there is in kneeling down to repeat an evening prayer, or in approaching the sacred table to partake of the memorials of the Saviour's body and blood; that our religion is to be a golden thread, whose firm texture is to knit our daily actions into a consistent whole, and whose sparkling beauty is to shine out ever, here and there, in the midst, adorning as well as pervading all.

"We exhibit the Saviour as their example; and we do well. We speak to them of the faultless child of twelve years old, lingering in the temple, engaged even then on his Father's business,—going down to Nazareth, and being in willing subjection to his earthly parents' will,—growing up to maturity, never provoked to anger, never swayed by temptation, never indisposed for a work of love,—holy, harmless and undefiled in the thousand circumstances of daily active life. Now let us seek to show how that blessed example would have accommodated itself to the ordinary life of King Alfred, of a clerk at the railway-station, of Henry,

a watchmaker's apprentice, or of Charles, an errand-boy; how the grace which in one position was so lovely would have evinced itself in another; how the dew, though seemingly white in the lily and red in the rose, is still the dew, the same in its essence, yet taking its hue from relative circumstances and natural character." (Note IX.)

§ 3. *Attention and illustration.*

Whatever plan of instruction is adopted, its success will depend upon the measure of attention which the pupil will give to it. He must be a very unobserving teacher who does not know that fixed attention is a hard thing for anybody to give, and that fixed attention to religious subjects is especially a hard thing for children to give.

But, as some one observes, "however hard it may be to gain attention, we *must* get it, if we are to do any good at all in the Sunday-school. It is of no use to tell children things which go no deeper than the surface of their minds, and which will be swept away to make room for the first trifling matter which claims admission there. If children are really to be the better for what we teach; if the truths which we love so well are really to go deep into their consciences and become the guiding principles of their lives, it is no half-hearted, languid attention which will serve our purpose. We are not dealing with facts which will bear to be received and then forgotten; but with truths, which, if they have any significance at all, have an eternal significance, and, if they are to have any practical value to a child at all, must not only be received

by his understanding, but lodged securely in his memory, and made to tell upon the formation of his character for this world and the next.

"It is necessary to recollect that all teachers have a great deal to do with the formation of the intellectual habits which will cling to their pupils for the rest of their lives. Of course, apart from the primary and immediate object of imparting instruction, we ought all to feel some interest in the sort of mental character which our scholars are acquiring during their intercourse with us. We must look forward to the time when they will be men and women, and consider what sort of men and women we would have them. We cannot help desiring that when hereafter they read a book, they shall read seriously; that, when they hear a sermon, they shall not bring pre-occupied or wandering minds to what they hear; that, as they move along in life, they shall not be unobserving triflers, gazing in helpless vacancy on the mere surface of things, but shall be able to fix their eyes and their hearts steadily on all the sources of instruction which may be open to them. If they are ever to do this, it is necessary that they should have acquired in youth the power of concentrating their attention. This power is the one qualification which so often constitutes the main difference between the wise and the foolish, the successful and the unsuccessful, man. Attention is the one habit of the human mind which, perhaps more than any other, forms a safeguard for intellectual progress, and even, under the divine blessing, for moral purity. Now, every time a child comes into our class, this habit is either strengthened or weakened. Something

is sure to be done while the children are with us either to make them better or worse in this respect for the whole of their future lives. If we claim and secure perfect obedience,—if, without being severe, we can be strict enough to enforce diligent attention to all we say,—we are attaining another important end besides that which is usually contemplated by school work; for we are developing the intellectual vigour of our scholar, and familiarizing him with a sort of effort which will be of immense use to him hereafter. But every time we permit disorder, trifling or wandering, we are helping to lower and vitiate the mental character of our pupils. We are encouraging them in a bad habit. We are, in fact, doing something to prevent them from ever becoming thoughtful readers, diligent observers and earnest listeners, as long as they live."

How to gain this attention is the earnest and anxious inquiry of thousands of teachers, and perhaps of many who have already gained as much of it as can be reasonably expected or required. Others, perhaps, make it in the hope that some method can be revealed which will enable them to obtain the end without using the means.

The teacher will not secure the desired attention by claiming it, by demanding it as a right, or by entreating it as a favour, nor by urging upon pupils the importance of the service, the sacredness of the day, the kindness of their teachers, or the great and solemn character of the truths they have to impart. All these are very legitimate arguments to use to professed Christians. The sense of these things keeps us thoughtful and silent many a time, perhaps, when we are hearing a dull or

unintelligible address. We feel that we *ought* to be attentive, and therefore we make an effort to be so.

But with children the true secret of attention is a real interest in the things taught. They should feel that the subject claims attention for itself,—not that the teacher claims attention *for* the subject. We may depend upon it that attention secured by threats, by authority, by promises, or, indeed, by any external means whatever, is not a genuine or effective thing. The real attention, such as alone can serve the purpose of a Sunday-school teacher, must always be founded on the fact that he has something to say which is worth a child's hearing, and that he can say it in such a manner that the child shall feel paid for listening.

"Truth is most interesting to children when illustrated by striking examples,—because they see the whole force of it in its practical bearing. Certainly the great Teacher sent from God has given us a variety of inimitable specimens of the mode of giving the most serious instruction in this way. Let the teacher try the experiment, and see which affects his class most seriously,—a solemn lecture on the love of God to sinners and their obligation to love him in return, or the story of the 'woman which was a sinner' and who met our Saviour in the house of Simon.

"The *manner* of illustrating lessons may be such as entirely to destroy the force and pungency of the truth they contain. The child may be amused, and even instructed, by the illustrations, while he loses sight of the truth itself or is entirely unaffected by its exhibition; while, on the other hand, truths and principles may be enforced with great sincerity and zeal, and yet in

such a cold and uninteresting manner as to weary and disgust the child's mind; and his ear becomes accustomed to sounds which, like those of the moaning wind, or the distant waterfall, serve only to lull him to sleep.

"It is sometimes well to state incidents, biographies, &c. from the Bible in different language from that used in the text,—preserving the entire truth of the inspired narrative, adding nothing to it, nor derogating from its dignity by low or trifling language.

"One of the best modes of impressing Scripture incidents is to ask the scholars to repeat them in their own language. Every one knows how many simple facts narrated in the Bible are misunderstood or overlooked until a more emphatic way of reading them suddenly sets them forth in an intelligible manner.

"Illustration, in the manner of the parables, will sometimes be very useful; but it needs to be simple, short, clear and founded on familiar things. Facts also strongly enforce truth, particularly if they have fallen under our own observation. The first question a child usually asks is, '*Is that true?*' The next, 'Did *you* see or know it?'

"Anecdotes of children, especially of those about the age of our own scholars, showing different characters under various circumstances,—permitting the children to bring written answers to questions proposed by the teacher,—getting them to prove or disprove certain points from Scripture,—appealing to their observation,—and especially the constant use of a reference-Bible," are among the more obvious and simple methods of exciting and retaining attention.

We have thus just alluded to a topic of great practical importance. Much has been said, and some of it well said, on the use of illustrations in teaching; but we have grave doubts whether any rules on the subject are not quite as likely to mislead as to guide. Effective illustrations must come of themselves,—not be coaxed or summoned at particular junctures. They are like the honest applauses of an audience, spontaneous and irrepressible. To direct when they are to be made, and with how much enthusiasm, at this and that passage of an oration, would be to divest them of all value and significance. A teacher may have a folio of incidents gathered from newspapers or furnished by his own observation and experience, or a dozen volumes of anecdotes arranged by subjects and minutely indexed, so as to be easy of reference, and yet find himself at his wits' end when a truth or principle requires to be enforced by an apt illustration. The truth is that the condition and circumstances of every class are so different and so continually fluctuating, and the method of dealing with them depends so much upon the state of their minds at the moment and upon the influences then prevailing around them, that the teacher is often forced to rely on what *then* suggests itself to illustrate or enforce a truth or principle. It is certainly his duty, in preparing himself for his work, to have distinct views of *what* he is to inculcate, and *how;* and in his preparation he is bound to consider the best method of presenting a given subject, so that it may be comprehended by each of his pupils and have its proper influence over their hearts and minds. To this end, he should study to find the most appropriate illustrations of the doctrine or principle which is to be

taught, and use them, not because the exercise will be dull without them, but because the lesson needs them as a means of impression.

An idea prevails that a certain amount of anecdotes or stories must be intermingled with a given quantity of dry didactic teaching in order to make the latter at all palatable. And the teacher is sent hither and thither in search of stories for this purpose. We are aware that those who urge the importance of illustration entirely repudiate any such idea as this, and that they prescribe rules on the subject which they believe would (if observed) prevent abuse. But are not the penetration and discrimination which are required to select appropriate illustrations, and the skill which is needful to use them with effect, rare endowments? And is not an untimely or inappropriate illustration worse than none? We are aware also of the eager desire which children manifest to hear anecdotes and stories, and how they will listen patiently for an hour to a succession of them, when they would be very restless under a few minutes' plain teaching. But perhaps the true end of Sunday-school teaching is better answered in the few minutes than in the hour.

It has been asserted, with some positiveness, that "the greater portion of every public instructor's remarks, be it from the pulpit, the lecture-room, or to the class, is forgotten before the dispersion of the audience. It is an exception to this rule whenever an illustration accompanies the remark. The simile, the anecdote, or the fable, is remembered, and the sentiment to which it is linked is obliged to go with it." We apprehend that, so far from there being any obligation on

the part of the sentiment to go with the story, it is very often left at home. It is a fact, familiar to those who have much to do with children and their habits, that even books which succeed in interesting a child so far as the story is concerned fail to convey the truth which the story was used to inculcate. Who does not know the quickness with which a young reader will discern where the narrative ends and the current of instruction sets in? Or who has not heard of the honest child who confessed that she liked to read such and such books very well, but that she always "skipped the reflections"?

It is to be feared that this well-known fondness of all ages for stories has led to very reprehensible carelessness in the relation of them. Indeed, we incline to believe that many vices of the popular mind in our day may be traced to the mixing up of truth and fiction so ingeniously that they can scarcely be distinguished. So indispensable is illustration supposed to be, that, if there is none at hand to suit the case, one must be made, or, if the main features will serve, the minor incidents are modified to meet the want. Perhaps we do not exaggerate when we say that nine-tenths of the illustrative stories in our popular books and periodicals would be completely spoiled if subjected to a rule prescribed by a celebrated moralist,—that a child should be corrected who says he saw a transaction through this window when in fact it was through the other. There can be no doubt that there prevails a morbid appetite for excitement. A meeting for prayer is dull unless some extraordinary thing is said or done. A revival of religion is not very interesting without

remarkable cases of the conversion of notorious profligates and scoffers. Memoirs of children, which are quite interesting to strangers, sometimes seem questionable to those who were acquainted with the subjects of them. And as to the stories which adorn the child's department in many of our religious newspapers, they are utterly incredible upon the face of them; and the attempt to palm them off as matters of fact upon simple-hearted, credulous children is an offence which should be "punished by the judges." Sometimes the same story in substance is told in different ways to the same school within a short time, so that the variations are commented on by the older children. We have heard of a story of the heathenism of a Southwestern family, which was so marvellous that some one was incited to inquire into its truth; and, upon tracing it to its source, the inquiry was evaded by saying that *it was enough to tell the story, without being required to swear to it.*

Those who "make up" a story to attract the attention of children, or to impress some truth, attempt to justify themselves on the general ground on which fiction, in other forms, is defended. If we would show the folly and sin of avarice, we frame a plot as much in accordance with real life as our skill enables us to do it, introducing characters and incidents by which to excite and retain the reader's attention, and at the same time to show the odiousness and degradation of the miser. It is not pretended that the characters or incidents ever occurred in that connection, or that the parties who were born and married and died in the story were ever seen in actual life. In what respect, it is asked, is a fictitious story used to illustrate a truth or principle more

objectionable? The practice to which our objection lies is that of relating to children *as facts* what we do not know or have not good reason to believe to be true. We may suppose cases or draw pictures of fancy or narrate fables as much as we think best, and they will pass for no more than they are worth; but when a narrative or anecdote is related which will make little or no impression unless it is received as true, and which therefore we intend shall be so received, we hold that it should be in faithful accordance with truth to the very letter.

We apprehend that the worth of this class of illustrations which are usually commended to teachers, is somewhat overrated. It is not so much a striking anecdote or a thrilling story that helps to make a lesson clear and impressive, as some incidental comparison drawn from objects with which the pupil is familiar. An overloaded omnibus or furniture-car breaks down, and the by-standers laugh at the man's folly in attempting to carry so heavy a load. Is his folly greater than that of the traveller through this world who so loads himself with riches as to fail in accomplishing the end of his journey? There can be no harmony between those who have not a common purpose in view,—the sinner and the Saviour, for example. The two rowers of a boat must steer for the same point; and the men at opposite ends of a cross-cut saw must pull and push together. In an infant school a more familiar style of illustration is allowable. The little boy was too short to reach the bell-handle, and he said, "Please, sir, ring this bell for me;" and he did. So the kind Saviour does for a sinful little child what such a child cannot do for

himself. Did you see the bill on the door of the corner house?—"To LET." Such a bill is pinned upon every idle boy's mind. The Bible is a book for all sorts of people, from the king to the beggar. The pony cannot reach up to the horse-trough, but both can drink at the brook. The Bible is a book level to all. Thus there is scarcely an object in nature, or an incident in life, which a skilful teacher cannot naturally and effectively work into an illustration, without encroaching on time or distracting attention.

Very just and reasonable cautions are given against the excess of illustrations and against using such as are inappropriate. But the difficulty lies behind their use: it is in their selection and application. If there were tact in seizing upon incidents fitted to the purpose, and in using them at the right juncture, no "cut-and-dried" illustrations would be in demand. We have known teachers who were so eager for, and so dependent on, this kind of help, that they would endeavour to shape their course of teaching so as to open the way for it.

Among the cautions to which we refer, is the very natural one that "the illustration should not be suffered to divert the pupil's attention from the truth." In other words, "The doctrine is not to be eclipsed by the story. As an instance of this overdoing, a teacher is supposed to be giving the thrilling details of a great fire. He represents how the smoke first, and then the flames, burst forth from every part of the house; how the panes of glass were heard to dash in pieces on the pavement below; how the engines came rattling along at full speed; how streams of water were poured into the building; how one little boy was left behind, and

everybody thought he would be burned to death; and how a brave fireman rushed through the flames and saved the child's life at the risk of his own. Such a story is regarded as out of place unless it is used to illustrate the obligation of sinners to love that Saviour who gave himself to rescue them from a more than earthly death. *In that case it does very well.*" So far as our intercourse with children goes, it would not "do very well" even in that case. We should suppose that the description of the fire would be remembered for a considerable time, that one or two would have formed more elevated ideas of the heroism of firemen and determined to be one as soon as he was old enough; but as to the lesson or truth to be inculcated respecting Christ's love for sinners, it would, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, fail of any lasting impression. The simple incident of the rescue of little Johnny Wesley from the chamber-window when his father's house was in flames, might be well used to show how an overruling Providence protected and preserved one who was thereafter to be so eminent a servant of God. The connection there is too obvious to escape even a child's observation.

And so what some poor mother in the neighbourhood did in the way of self-denial and privation for the sake of a sick or deformed, a blind or idiotic, child, might possibly assist an infant mind in apprehending the Saviour's love to sinners; and such a comparison is perhaps warranted by the apostle's language in Romans v. 7, 8. But in neither of these cases would there be room or material (without perversion) for the exciting detail which attended the story of the fire. We have seen a long story about a sword-fish piercing a vessel, and re-

ceiving his death-wound in the act, drawn out very circumstantially to illustrate the folly of resisting the claims of the gospel. No one can doubt that the story will be remembered while the warning is forgotten. Not so with the great Teacher sent from God, who in his miraculous appearance to Saul, gently reproves his blindness and malevolence with a question—"Why persecutest thou me?" And then uses a most impressive figure of a perverse bullock who should attempt to oppose the will of his driver by striking his own feet against the sharp goad which was used to make him go forward. There was no danger here of the truth being "eclipsed by the story."

We must not be misunderstood. We concede every thing which can be justly claimed in behalf of illustrative teaching or speaking. Nor should we have much fear of its excess if teachers or orators would restrict themselves to an accurate statement of something they know, or have every reason to believe, to be true. But the practice of setting children or their mothers to sighing and crying over death-bed scenes and speeches that never occurred, or remarkable sayings and doings of children for which there is no reliable authority, and especially such as any reflecting person would be slow to credit on any authority, we do most earnestly deplore and oppose. It is a question, perhaps, whether much of the skepticism which pervades so large a portion of the youthful community has not been nourished (possibly engendered) by this mixing up of truth and fiction, giving them the impression that unless they are on their guard their faith will be imposed upon. An intelligent traveller in the Holy Land tells us that

so many places and objects are pointed out as connected with persons or incidents of sacred history, that the mind becomes confused; the true and the fictitious, the probable and the incredible, are so much mixed up that at last they all come to be regarded as alike unworthy of credit.

There are many thousands of pertinent and striking "illustrations"—if we must use the term—in Holy Scripture; and there we are first to look for our patterns. We commend a diligent study of them to all religious teachers of the young, and would especially direct their attention to the following among other noteworthy characteristics.

1. The incident or subject used is generally something present at the moment or very familiar to everybody,—the harvest-field, the flowers, the changes of the sky and winds, social customs, &c.

2. The truth is not one thing and the "illustration" another, but they are so incorporated one with the other as to make a complete whole. The leaven in the meal, the lost piece of money, the lost sheep and the lost son, the creditor and his two debtors, the robbed man on the road to Jericho, the distribution of the talents, are instances of this intimate blending. No one, we venture to say, ever read either of these parables without some impression of the truth taught.

3. Not an instance can be pointed out in which an incident is used for an illustration of which any child living in Judea at that time would doubt the occurrence. When our Lord referred to an historical circumstance, it was one which any of his disciples could verify in a few minutes. In a short and useful British tractate

on illustrative teaching, now before us, several approved specimens are given of the manner in which this difficult art should be practised. In a lesson on the conversion of Saul, the doctrine is raised (Acts ix. 1 and 2,) that evil passions ever grow stronger and stronger, and the illustration proposed is as follows:—

Some few years ago a noble steamer moored in one of the harbours of the United States was discovered to be on fire. The engine was instantly started and the prow of the vessel directed to the shore. But the flames soon rendered the helm useless, and such of the crew as were on board were obliged to jump into the small boat and leave the steamer to her fate. Soon the engines worked more fiercely, the wheels revolved with fearful speed and hurried the vessel through the waters. The sight was terrible. At last came one tremendous shock, and all was darkness and ruin. Such is man when seized by an evil passion, whether the spirit of pride, or of envy, or, as in Saul's case, of persecution. He grows worse and worse, and is hurried along, unless God interfere, to eternal ruin!

We are not prepared to say that precisely such an occurrence never took place in any harbour of the United States,—though we think it would require some explanations to make it accord with truth; but we cannot regard it as a happy or impressive narrative for the purpose to which it is put. In the first place, the incident clearly eclipses the truth. The image of the burning vessel will remain on the mind of the worst-tempered boy in the class, while the lesson will not be thought of a second time, possibly not at all. In the second place, it gives a false view of the working of human passions. The worst of

them, as avarice, envy, jealousy, &c., are not always nor generally violent and headstrong. Most frequently they slowly and silently corrode and corrupt the heart of their unhappy slave, and he passes into the gulf of perdition almost without the recognition of his true character even by his fellow-men. Contrast with this our divine Teacher's parable in Matthew xii. 42–45.

It is really wonderful with what simplicity and directness the most solemn and sublime truths and duties of our religion are set forth by their divine Author in his familiar discourses with plain unlettered men and women. To cite but a single instance or two. Anybody would watch for a thief if it was known at what hour and at what door or window he would attempt to break in. He would be a fool or a madman to sleep just then and allow his house to be plundered. But suppose he had no intimation of the hour, but knew that some time in the course of the night the attempt would be made. What then? Why, of course, he will not be off his guard at all, but will watch all night. The Son of man will come as a thief in the night. The exact time is concealed from us. What then? Why, we must be on the watch every moment, lest, coming suddenly, he find us sleeping. There was a servant whose debt was forgiven, but who refused to forgive his fellow-servant. No one can study that little passage of the sacred narrative without admiring and adoring the wisdom which reveals, in forms that babes can comprehend, truths into which angels desire to look.

We dismiss this topic with a single additional remark,—viz.: that a simple, pertinent illustration drawn from nature or other equally true source may be very

useful in making a subject impressive or even intelligible, but the telling of stories or anecdotes with a view to entertain or interest minds which cannot otherwise be held attentive to instruction, and that, too, without considering whether they are true or false, pertinent or impertinent, is unworthy of a teacher, and must be hurtful to his pupils and, of course, offensive to God.

§ 4. *Methods of teaching.*

What is "teaching"? A few words in reply to this question. What do we mean by the term when applied to a trade, as house-painting, to sewing, or to farming? We mean that the party taught is thereby enabled to follow the business of painting, or sewing, or farming, to advantage. The apprentice does not consider himself well used by the master if he is not taught to work skilfully at his trade, provided he is willing and competent to learn. Teaching, then, is an eminently practical work, and, *if real*, must tell its own tale.

But all Sunday-school teaching is not *real*. There are very good Sunday-school teachers who fall far below the standard we should prescribe; and yet they are *real* teachers. They are not ignorant, nor indolent, nor careless. They prepare themselves with commendable diligence, are attentive to class-duties, and God blesses their labours.

The Smiths are very good farmers,—*real* farmers. They are industrious, understand their business, and succeed in it. The Lord of the harvest rewards their industry with full barns and storehouses. But there are a few farmers who go altogether ahead of the Smiths. They are noted. They show well at agricultural exhi-

bitions and in the market-places. They get extra crops out of their land with the same expense and labour as the Smiths, and other farmers point to them as patterns. The Joneses are among these. And, again, there is here and there what people call "a crack farm." The owner puts all competitors at a distance. Now, it is the "crack farm" of Mr. Johnson that keeps all the other farmers wide awake. Johnson's influence is felt through all the inferior ranks. If his farm were out of the way, the Joneses would sink to the level of the Smiths, and the Smiths would be no better than the common run of farmers. Remove the stimulus to exertion which a view or a report of the "crack farm" furnishes, and the general standard would be at once sensibly lowered.

So, in a race, there may be eighty good runners, and nineteen who are very superior as such; but there is only one Asahel, and he takes the prize. Would the race have been as exciting to the eighty if the nineteen had not run, or to the ninety and nine if the hundredth had not been "lighter of foot" than they? (Note X.)

If we describe a *real* teacher, it is not to disparage, but to excite, others. We do not expect all farmers to have "crack farms," nor all racers to be winners; but if we would have the best of either, they must be stimulated by the highest aim that is within reach.

1. Real teaching, then, is *hard* work. A teacher may pass very well with scarcely any labour at all. He can be in his place punctually, keep his class and class-book in order, hear verses and hymns recited, ask the printed questions, see to the exchange of books, and just about get through when the closing bell rings. Such a teacher may be connected with a school for years, and have

credit, living and dying, for exemplary conduct in his vocation, and yet never teach for a single hour. There is a story of a little girl, who, noticing the expression in the superintendent's opening prayer that "the teachers might have wisdom," observed to a class-mate that "she didn't think their teacher needed much wisdom for any thing she did for them." The difference between mortar tempered and untempered is discernible even by a child.

2. Real Sunday-school teaching is *up-hill* work: wind, tide and current are all against us. There are people, who think themselves philosophers, who maintain that religious truth is attractive to the natural mind, and that the distaste which is often felt for it results from the unhappy way of presenting it. There is undoubtedly a way of exhibiting truth which overcomes, in some degree, the natural aversion to it; but holiness has no attractions for a sinful heart. A way must be made to the hearts and minds of most children and youth through all the obstacles and embarrassments which the world, the flesh and the devil can present. Before any permanent influence can be exerted upon them by Christian teachers, their love, confidence and respect must be gained; and this—for comparative strangers, at least—is a work of time, and is attended with many discouragements.

3. Real Sunday-school teaching is an *absorbing* work. Few persons, even among those who are best trained, can afford time for many collateral engagements if they would do their teaching-work well. But the majority of teachers are actively engaged in secular business, and few have at their command more than half a dozen

working-hours during the week that they can devote to this or a similar purpose without neglecting important personal or social duties. Hence, if this brief period is to serve for a variety of other avocations, the Sunday-school work will be the chief sufferer. It can ill afford to take half a heart or half a mind.

4. Real Sunday-school teaching is an *exciting* work. To be obliged to accomplish any great object in a little time, will generally produce either earnestness or despondency. A large fire in a city is exciting, because so much interest is concentrated upon one half-hour. If not subdued, it will spread, and who knows how far? The loss of millions of property may be prevented by the right direction of a stream of water at the critical moment. Sunday-school teachers have a great work to do in a little time. Interests of more value than the wealth of a city or a world may be suspended on the right improvement of an hour or a minute.

I promised (says one) to give my class an account of the institution of the Christian Sabbath or Lord's day, and why we should not work or play then as we do on other days. One of my boys, and perhaps the brightest, had a Sabbath-breaking home and parents, (his father was a miller;) and he seemed most anxious of them all to have the account which I promised to give them the next Sabbath. When the day came, they reminded me of my promise to tell them "about the day;" but it was very warm, and I was weary and not very well, and I told them I would certainly do it the next Sunday. On the next Sunday, while other children were coming to church, that bright boy went into his father's mill-pond and was drowned. Who knows what five minutes' dis-

cussion of the sacredness of the Lord's day might have done to avert such a catastrophe?

5. Real Sunday-school teaching is *living*, not mechanical work. The teacher must be wide awake. How can he be otherwise, with six or eight inquisitive, curious, restless minds around him, stimulating him to meet their various and often opposite wants? They are alive; and how can he help being alive too?

6. Real Sunday-school teaching, though not mechanical, is *methodical*. The good teacher has a digested plan, and he executes it. Method requires the right thing to be done in the right time and place. It is seen in the class-book as well as in the class. Some very good teachers are careless about their class-books and about the order of their classes. This is to their reproach. But it does not follow that those who are careless about their class-books or about the order of their classes, are good teachers. Geniuses may be slovens; but slovens are not always geniuses.

7. Real Sunday-school teaching is *thorough*. A real teacher observes the sensible maxim to "make clean work as he goes." He not only teaches the child, but he satisfies himself that the child is taught. He does not suffer him to suppose that an *impotent* man and an *impudent* one are alike, or that ten *lepers* are no other than ten *leopards*. The simple question whether he has ever seen an impotent man or a leper will at once detect or prevent any such mistakes. It would surprise some teachers to know how many religious words and phrases, prayers and exhortations, are Greek to their hearers.

8. Real Sunday-school teaching is *trustful*. The true secret of success in this work is trust in the word,

the power and the promise of God. The predominant motive which animates and impels the labourer is his desire to glorify God in Christ. He is a sinner saved, seeking to save sinners. He has faith in the sanctifying power of divine truth, and in the promise that the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to make that truth effectual to salvation, will be given in answer to prayer.

9. Real Sunday-school teaching is *hopeful*. It is true that we meet now and then very stubborn cases of intractableness, and are almost tempted to regard further effort as useless. But, in the good providence of God, there are monuments all along the path of Sunday-school history to show that labour in love is all-but omnipotent. Think of the boy in an Irish school who was regarded as incorrigible and made an object of special remark to visitors who came into the school. "We have one boy that troubles us beyond measure: he is the black sheep of the school; and we shall probably have to eject him."

A visitor to whom he was pointed out spoke to him in a low and kind voice (he had been spoken to as kindly many times before) and gave him a little book. The moment was auspicious: the words spoken were in season: a ray of light found its way into that dark little world of thought and passion. In process of time he submitted to Christ, became a missionary in the West Indies, built up a flourishing church, and one of his black converts remitted five pounds to the people of his native place when afterwards it was desolated by famine and pestilence. While there is life there is hope.

10. There can be no real Sunday-school teaching without some degree of *enthusiasm*. The spirit that

animates the teacher must be indomitable. That which can be done shall be done. He feels as the great Reformer did when he exclaimed, "If all the world is against Luther, then Luther is against all the world!" or like the missionary dying on the shores of Africa, who wished his epitaph to be, "Let a thousand missionaries die, but let Africa be redeemed."

11. Real Sunday-school teaching is *successful*, and munificently rewarded. It may be that most of the pains we bestow in qualifying ourselves for the business of instruction seems to be of little account, and that our efforts to impart knowledge and excite attention are all-but fruitless. Nevertheless, we are not allowed to doubt that what is sown in weakness God can raise in power. The late Rev. J. A. James has given us a sketch, which can scarcely be called fanciful, of the scene which will hereafter open to one who has faithfully served in this province of Christian enterprise.

"My imagination," says he, "has sometimes presented me with this picture of a faithful teacher's entrance to the state of everlasting rest. The agony of dissolution is closed, the triumph of faith completed, and the conquering spirit hastens to her crown. Upon the confines of the heavenly world, a form divinely fair awaits her arrival. Rapt in astonishment at the dazzling glory of its celestial inhabitants, and as yet a stranger in the world of spirits, she inquires, 'Is this Gabriel, chief of all the heavenly hosts? and am I honoured with *his* aid to guide me to the throne of God?' With a smile of ineffable delight, such as gives fresh beauty to an angel's countenance, the mystic form replies, 'Dost thou remember little Elizabeth, who was

in yonder world a Sunday-scholar in thy class? Dost thou recollect the child who wept as thou talked to her of sin and directed her to the cross of the dying Redeemer? God smiled with approbation upon thy effort, and by his own Spirit sealed the impression upon her heart, in characters never to be effaced. Providence removed her from beneath thy care before the fruit of thy labour was visible. The seed, however, had taken root, and it was the business of another to water what thou didst sow. Cherished by the influence of Heaven, the plant of religion flourished in her heart and shed its fragrance upon her character. Piety, after guarding her from the snares of youth, cheered her amidst the accumulated trials of an afflicted life, supported her amidst the agonies of her last conflict, and elevated her to the mansions of immortality; and now behold before thee the glorified spirit of that poor child, who, under God, owes the eternal life on which she has lately entered to thy faithful labours in the Sunday-school, and who is now sent by our Redeemer to introduce thee to the world of glory, as thy first and least reward for guiding the once thoughtless, ignorant, wicked Elizabeth to the world of grace. Hail, happy spirit! Hail, favoured of the Lord! Hail, deliverer of my soul! Welcome to the world of eternal glory!'

"I can trace the scene no further. I cannot paint the raptures produced in the honoured teacher's bosom by this unexpected interview. I cannot describe the mutual gratitude and love of two such spirits meeting on the confines of heaven; much less can I follow them to their everlasting mansion and disclose the bliss which they shall enjoy before the throne of God."

In order to meet these requisitions of his office, the teacher must have the *child's co-operation.* Few teachers are aware, probably, how much the mind of even a child can be exercised upon materials already in store. It has been said that "sermons are like whole joints of meat for men to manage; catechizing is mince meat, shred into questions and answers, fit for young children to eat, and easy to digest." The little matter which a child tells the teacher about his own thoughts he will remember, which is better than having the wisest saying of his teacher to forget. We have pertinent testimony to this point from the pen of one who was himself a remarkably successful catechist, and the author of a valuable little treatise on the subject,* published some ten years since. The account he gives of the power of the art over himself, when employed by a master hand, is very instructive.

"Perhaps, gentle reader," he observes, "before I actually enter upon my task of teaching you how to teach others by catechizing, it may be as well to tell you how I became a catechist myself; for the thought seized upon me and occupied me much in very early life. I was at school at Rugby, and, at the time I speak of, was in what we called the '*upper third.*' The '*upper fourth*' was under the care of Mr. Innes. As I was sitting one evening in the room of my private tutor, Mr. Homer, some one knocked at the door, and in came Mr. Innes. 'Bather,' says he, 'when Mr. Homer has done with you, will you come up into my room? I

* "Hints on the Art of Catechising, by Archdeacon E. Bather." —London, Rivingtons, 1848.

want to speak to you: you will find nobody there but O—— (naming one of my school-fellows) and myself.' Of course I went; and Mr. Innes, motioning my companion to a chair, and myself to another, took his own, and addressed us thus:—'I am going to set you two boys very hard at work. Pray, O——, do you know any thing about astronomy?' 'Not much, I am afraid, sir.' 'And you, Bather?' 'Not so much, sir, as O——, I am afraid.' 'Well, now, do not flatter yourselves that I am going to tell you any thing about it; for I shall do no such thing. Nevertheless, you shall know more of it, and a good deal, too, before you go out of this room.'

"He then put questions to us both, by which he soon elicited all the particulars of such little knowledge as we possessed; and then he questioned us further, soon causing us to make many blunders, and then making us to correct our answers. So that we certainly *did* quit the room with fuller and more orderly notions of the matter than we had brought into it.

"Now, if I have thought of this once, I have thought of it five hundred times. Certainly, I did not become an astronomer; but I was led to think and to discern what must be the most effectual way of imparting knowledge. I had heard many a lecture before, which had gone in at one ear and out at the other, and, indeed, I had sometimes been constrained, as it became wearisome to me, to amuse myself with counting the panes in the windows, or the knobs on the cornice; but under Mr. Innes I never flagged; he set me a-thinking, and I could have listened all night."

This knowledge of the operation of his own mind

was turned to good account. After he became a public religious teacher, he says,—

"I set to my work at once, and preached as plainly and as well as I knew how; and I should be sorry to think that no good came of it. Still, however, I could not but see that with respect to the elder part of my congregation, talk as I would, I could not talk it into them. Now and then I might say a thing that would strike them; but as to the general argument of my discourse, it was all thrown away. My old lesson in catechizing came into my mind, and I turned myself to the younger sort. We had at that time in the parish a good many boys from thirteen to seventeen years of age. They worked in the collieries on weekdays, and came to church on Sundays, and they were generally very well disposed. So, 'I will take my catechumens from these,' I thought; but, then, not one in six of them could read. I found a couple of working colliers who could read very well, and I made them my Sunday-school masters. The chief thing they had to do was this:—I appointed them a portion of Scripture, not exceeding two verses at the most, and I saw that they could read it themselves with intelligence. They then read it, pause by pause, to the boys, who soon learned the words and could repeat them with intelligence too. Then, after divine service, I got my pupils to deliver the passage to me with one voice, and I questioned them upon it: and by this means I found that I could communicate much religious knowledge, which might be, and has been, held fast till now. Besides this, I had two little dame-schools, containing sixty children each, and I thought I would try to do something with

them that might be of use to others who should hear them. I appointed a service on a weekday, and catechized these children before the congregation. It was very hard work. I could not for a very long while get the children to speak audibly and distinctly, and I was obliged to answer three-quarters of the questions myself. However, you will always have a sharp lad or two among one hundred and twenty children; and 'Jack' made a good hit now and then, and 'Tom' now and then, and the parents were pleased."

We apprehend that there are, in almost every religious community, mines of religious and moral susceptibilities that might be opened and worked to great advantage if due diligence and skill were employed and the instruments well adapted to this end. The Sunday-school is one, and perhaps the most efficient, of these instruments, and, so far as it is properly employed, its results are too palpable to be overlooked; but it is but very partially and imperfectly used. What it might do to prepare a generation for the earnest, intelligent, successful service of the church of God, and, of course, for the well-being of our race, it has scarcely entered into the minds of men to conceive. By no other existing scheme of propagating religious truth can we expect to reach the homes of the poor, uneducated and irreligious. They are, and are likely to remain, outside of the public ministrations of the gospel. If we could concentrate upon the humble agency of the Sunday-school the intelligence, the piety and the zeal which it is most worthy to command, we should cherish the hope that, at least, our section of the globe would be "full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

§ 5. *Principles of Catechizing.*

Almost all teaching is done by question and answer, or, as the process is usually termed, by catechizing. For although this word is usually applied to instruction in the elements of religious doctrine, it is equally applicable to any other science. Thus we have catechisms of botany, natural philosophy, &c. In most catechisms properly so called, facts or propositions are stated, which the pupil commits to memory, and the question is framed to draw out what is thus committed. Though the words "inform," "instruct" and "teach" are used interchangeably to signify the act or art of imparting knowledge, they by no means convey the same idea. We inform a man of the death of his brother. We instruct an agent how to negotiate a loan. We teach an apprentice the art of watchmaking. The process of teaching includes the communication of knowledge, the training of the faculties to proper exercise, and the supplying of defects ascertained by pertinent questioning. I do not *teach* a child by hearing him recite a dozen texts of the Bible, or a few verses of a hymn, or a score of answers to as many questions in a book.

If I tell him that the surface of the globe is either land or water, and that but one-third of it is land, he receives knowledge. If to the question, how much of the surface of the globe is land, he replies, one-third, I ascertain that he rightly understood what I told him, and that he remembers it. But if I ask him how much of the surface of the globe is water, there is some thinking for him to do; his reasoning-faculties must be employed as well as his memory.

Having furnished the material for thought to work upon, my question not only suggests the point to which it is to be directed, but excites its exercise. If he replies, one-third, I perceive that his thinking-powers are at fault in their exercise; and my aim is to give them another direction, without wearying or confusing them. I resort to his memory, which serves him with the best effect. "How much of the surface of the globe did you say is land?" "One-third?" "Yes." "And how many thirds are there in the whole of any thing?" This is a simpler task for thought than the other, and he replies, "Three." I then aid him, if need be, in the further proof. "If the whole surface of the globe is either land or water, and if only one of the three parts is land, what must the other two-thirds be?" He replies, "*Water.*" "Yes. Then how much of the surface of the globe is water?" "Two-thirds." I then remind him of his first answer, and give him time to perceive the error.

It will be observed that the larger part of this supposed colloquy could not have been anticipated by the compiler of a question-book. If the answer to the first question, "How much of the surface of the globe is land?" is given in the book and committed by the pupil, the office of the teacher is a very mechanical one. It is only to see that the child's memory serves him well. If the answer is not given in the book, it will be needful that the teacher should himself know it. If the pupil's task has been to seek the proper answer from other sources, the teacher's office is still little else than mechanical. He asks the question, and waits for the answer. If the proper answer is given by the

child, well; if not, most teachers will tell him what it is, and pass on to the next question, leaving no impression beyond that upon the drum of the ear.

One of the earliest, though not the easiest, duties of a teacher is to ascertain what a pupil already knows; for what he already knows is the foundation on and from which new knowledge must be built up. In ascertaining this in a class, much positive knowledge may be incidentally communicated.

The following example has been given of the mode of doing this.

Suppose a teacher is giving a lesson on geography. After speaking of long distances, pointed out on the globe or the map, he wishes to know what idea the scholars have of such distances. "How are the miles marked on our roads?" "*By mile-stones.*" "How far is your cottage from the school, James?" "*Half a mile, sir.*" "How far is Bridgetown?" "*Two miles.*" "How far is Applethorpe?" "*Four miles.*" "Do you know how far Welford is?" "*Father once said it was twenty miles.*"

All this is mere examination, ascertaining what the boys know; though, as we will afterwards show, it probably imparts knowledge to *some* of the class at the same time.

But now for teaching. "You said Welford was twenty miles off. Now look at this map, and tell me how far the sea is from us at the nearest point." No answer, or else mere guesses. "Tom, take a strip of paper, and mark on it from the map the distance between our village and Welford. There, that mark stands for how many miles?" "*Twenty.*" "Now mark

the distance to the sea, and measure one mark against the other. One is ten times as long as the other." "The sea is ten times as far off as"—"*Welford.*" "Welford is twenty miles off; then the sea is"—? "*Ten times twenty, or two hundred.*" "How far is Harston?" No answer. "You have been there, Tom." "*Yes, sir, last week.*" "How long did it take you to walk?" "*Fifty minutes, sir; for I remember that the clock struck ten just as I set off, and when I got to Harston Churchyard it wanted ten minutes to eleven.*" "How far is your cottage from the school-house?" "*One mile, sir.*" "How long does it take you to come here?" "*Mother sends me off half an hour before school-time.*" "Does it take you half an hour if you walk straight on?" "*No, sir: when it rains, I can walk here in twenty minutes.*" "Now, boys, if Tom can walk here—just one mile—in twenty minutes, how far can he walk in fifty minutes?" "*Two miles and a half, sir.*" "Then, how far is Harston Churchyard?" "*Two miles and a half.*" Now, here is more than mere examination. The boys have learned how far off the sea was, and the distance to Harston Church. And how? In each case, by the use of previous knowledge. The *known* distance to Welford enabled them to ascertain the *unknown* distance to the sea, and the *known* rate of Tom's pedestrian progress enabled them to calculate the *unknown* distance to Harston. Not only so, but the boys have acquired mental discipline,—have learned a fresh lesson on the use of knowledge; as Tom, for instance, could in future give a tolerable guess as to the distance of any place to which he had walked. If no boy knew the distance to Welford, then to show them that the distance to the sea

was ten times as great would not tell them how far off the sea was:—ten times an unknown is still an unknown. Again, if Tom did not know how fast he could walk, he could not judge how far fifty minutes' walking would take him. Had the first question failed, the next could not have been asked: the teacher must have found another track. He might indeed *tell*, but not with half the force. He might say, "I can walk a mile in fifteen minutes, and I can walk to Harston in half an hour and eight minutes: so Harston is about two miles and a half off;" but the boys would not feel half the interest in this statement that they would in working it out for themselves.

In dealing with a class, many questions will be experiments; that is, the teacher asks them, in doubt whether they will be answered or not. If answered, they rivet the knowledge; if not answered, they point out an ignorance which the teacher then proceeds to supply.

But, supposing that an intelligent boy answers a difficult question, whilst a boy of good disposition but less brains, is puzzled, and a third, of equal power of mind but of great indolence, will not make the effort. Should a teacher be satisfied with this? Will that boy's answer so teach his class-mates that the teacher may pass on? We should say, as a general rule, it will not. That a school-fellow should tell them, may impress the boys more than if their teacher told them; but it will be far better for the teacher to *clench* the matter.

Suppose the question had been answered at once by a bright boy. You look quickly round your class. Alfred, a dull, heavy, but well-disposed boy, seems puzzled at the

process of the answer; whilst Harry, sharp enough, but sadly idle, is gaping about him, and if he heard the question would not trouble himself to discover the answer. Now, one rule will not apply to all such cases. The question might be a trivial one, when it would be a waste of valuable time to linger over it; or it may be an important one, leading to some practical lesson, when it would be wrong to slur it over, or to indulge one's self in teaching the sharp boy whilst the stupid and the careless were left to themselves.

Elijah fled for his life into the wilderness when he heard that Jezebel threatened to kill him. "What made Elijah flee?" you ask; and many a scholar in our Sunday-schools who has already had the benefit of some training, ought to be able to give, as the reply, *Want of faith.* But in most classes, (excepting, of course, the oldest pupil,) however wise the classification, this answer would be too good: many of the lad's class-mates would be left behind. If we may take a familiar illustration, that lad has got a leaping-pole, and has learned to use it; the others must have stepping-stones found for them. So you go back, thus:—"Who had threatened Elijah? What had she said she would do? What had raised her anger against Elijah? Who had bid Elijah do that thing? Then, as Elijah had done his duty, whom should he have trusted to preserve him? Did he trust God? Then he ran away because he——?" *Did not trust God.* "Yes, or as A. said, for want of faith."

This example not only shows the method by which the measure of existing knowledge is ascertained, and by which it may be made self-increasing, but it also

shows how inadequate the most complete question-book must be to answer the whole or even the chief part of the ends of teaching. The actual *present* motions or inclinations of the pupil's mind must be, to a great extent, the guide to the teacher's methods of dealing with it. In no other way can they be brought into communion; and hence the dull, mechanical, listless position in which the minds of both are often found, when they should be in the closest sympathy.

A right understanding of the principles of catechizing are so important to the religious teacher of children as to justify a thorough study of them; and we are happy to transfer to these pages the substance of the views of a transatlantic writer, who has evidently thought closely on the subject.

The best questioning (he says) is that which attracts least attention to the questioner, and makes the learners seem to be the most important parties concerned.

The teacher will do well, therefore, to practise himself in using great plainness of speech, and in constructing questions in the fewest possible words.

Avoid telling much in your questions. Never, if you can help it, communicate a fact in your question. Contrive to educe every fact from the class. It is better to pause for a moment, and to put one or two subordinate questions, with a view to bring out the truth you are seeking, than to tell any thing which the children could tell you. A good teacher seldom conveys information in the form of a question. If he tells his class something, it is not long before he makes the class tell him the same thing again; but his question never assumes the same form, or employs the same phrase-

ology, as his previous statement; for if it does, the form of the question readily suggests the answer, and the exercise fails to challenge the judgment and memory of the children as it ought to do. I may, for instance, want to bring out the fact that Jerusalem is the chief city in the Holy Land. Now, suppose I do it thus:—"What is the chief city in the Holy Land?" "Jerusalem." "Of what country is Jerusalem the chief city?" "The Holy Land." Here each question carries with it the answer to the other; and the consequence is, that they test little or nothing, and serve scarcely any useful purpose.

For this reason, it is always important, in questioning on a passage of Scripture, to avoid using the words of Scripture: otherwise we may greatly deceive ourselves as to the real extent of knowledge possessed by the class. We will suppose, for example, that you are giving a lesson on the meaning of the Christian injunction, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and that the class has first been questioned as to the meaning of it, and proved unable to give a full and satisfactory explanation of the scope and meaning of those memorable words. The parable of the good Samaritan has been appointed as the lesson for the day. It has been recited or read twice or thrice by the class in turn, and then the teacher takes the first verse and reads it slowly to the class:—

"*A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*"—Luke x. 30.

Some teachers would proceed to question thus:—

Who is this parable about? *A certain man.* Where did he go from? *Jerusalem.* Where to? *Jericho.* What sort of people did he fall among? *Thieves.* What did they do with his raiment? *Stripped him of it.* What did they do with the man himself? *Wounded him.* In what state did they leave him? *Half dead.*

Observe here that the teacher has covered the whole area of the narrative, and asked a question on every fact. So far, he has done well. But it is to be noticed that every question was proposed as nearly as possible in the words of the Bible, and required for its answer one (generally *but* one) of those words. Now, it is very easy for a boy or girl, while the echoes of the Bible narrative just read still linger in the ear, or the words themselves come up to memory, to answer every such question by rote merely, with scarcely any effort of thought. It is very possible to fill up the one remaining word of such elliptical sentences as those which have been used as questions, without having any perception at all of the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

So that, if you desire to secure a thorough understanding of the sacred narrative, it will be necessary to propose questions constructed on a different plan, avoiding the use of the exact phraseology of Scripture, and requiring for answers other words than those contained in the narrative.

Let us go over the same subject again, first introducing it by one or two preliminary questions:—

Who used these words?

To whom were they spoken?

Why were they uttered?

Repeat the question which the lawyer asked?

What is the parable about? (Various answers.) One says, *A man who went on a journey.* What do you call a man who goes on a journey? *A traveller.* In what country was the man travelling? *Judea.* Let us trace his route on the map.

In what direction was he travelling? *Eastward.* Through what kind of country? (Here the teacher's own information should supply a fact or two about its physical features.) What should you suppose from the lesson was the state of the country at that time? *Thinly peopled; roads unfrequented,* &c. &c. How do you know this? *Because he fell among thieves.** Give another expression for "fell among." *Happened to meet with.* Another word for "thieves." *Robbers.* How did the robbers treat this traveller? *They stripped him of his raiment.* What does the word raiment mean?† *Clothes.* Besides robbing him of his clothes, what else did they do? *Wounded him.* Explain that word. *Injured him, hurt him very much,* &c. &c. How do you know from the text that he was much hurt? *They left him half dead. They almost killed him.*

Now, observe here that the aim has been twofold. First, not to suggest the answer by the form of the question. Hence another sort of language has been adopted, and the children have, therefore, been made to interpret the Biblical language into that of ordinary

* Not a necessary conclusion.

† Such a question, when too simple for most of the class, might be put to an individual who is supposed not to know. So also of the next two questions.

life. Secondly, not to be satisfied with single words as answers, especially with the particular word which is contained in the narrative itself, but always to *translate* it into one more familiar. Children can often give the word which suffices to answer their teacher's inquiry, who are yet ignorant of the whole statement of which that word forms a part. After going over verses like these in detail, we should recommend varying the form of the question, thus:—

"Now, what have we learned in this verse?"

"That there was a traveller going from the chief city of Judea to another town near the Jordan, on the northeast."

"Well, and what happened to him?"

"That he was robbed and half killed, and left very weak and helpless."

A teacher ought not, in fact, to be satisfied until he can get entire sentences for answers. These sentences will generally be paraphrases of the words used in the lesson; and the materials for making the paraphrases will have been developed in the course of the lesson, by demanding, in succession, meanings and equivalents for all the principal words. Remember that the mere ability to fill up a parenthetical or elliptical sentence proves nothing, beyond the possession of a little tact, and verbal memory.

It is worth while often to turn round suddenly on some inattentive member of the class, or upon some one who has just given a mechanical answer, with the question, "What have we just said?" "Tell me what we have just learned about such a person." Observe that the answer required to such a question must ne-

cessarily be a whole sentence; it will be impossible to answer it without a real effort of thought and of judgment in the selection of the learner's words, or without an actual acquaintance with the fact which has been taught.

It is of great importance that questions should be *definite* and *unmistakable*, and, for the most part, that they admit of but one answer. An unskilful teacher puts vague questions, such as, "What did he do?" "What did Abraham say?" "How did Joseph feel at such a time?" "What lesson ought we to learn from this?"—questions to which, no doubt, *he* sees the right answer, because it is already in his mind, but which, perhaps, admit of several equally good answers, according to the different points of view from which different minds would look at them. He does not think of this. He fancies that what is so clear to him ought to be equally clear to others; he forgets that the minds of the children may be moving on other tracks, so to speak, even though directed to the same object. So, when an answer comes which was not the one he expected, even though it is a perfectly legitimate one, he rejects it; while, if any child is fortunate enough to give the precise answer which was in the teacher's mind, he is commended and rewarded, even though he has exerted no more thought on the subject than the others.

Vague and indefinite questions, we have always observed, produce three different results, according to the class of children to whom they are addressed. The really thoughtful and sensible boy is simply bewildered by them. He is very anxious to be right, but he is

not clear as to what answer his teacher expects: so he is silent, looks puzzled, and is perhaps mistaken for a dunce. The bold and confident boy, who does not think, when he hears a vague question, answers at random; he is not quite sure whether he is right or wrong, but he tries the experiment, and is thus strengthened in a habit of inaccuracy and encouraged in the mischievous practice of guessing. There is a third class of children whom we have noticed, not very quick, but sly and knowing nevertheless, who watch the teacher's peculiarities, know his methods, and soon acquire the knack of observing the structure of his sentences, so as to find out what answer he expects. They do not understand the subject so well, perhaps, as many others, but they understand the teacher better, and can more quickly pronounce the mysterious word or the particular answer he expects. Now, we do not hesitate to say that, so far as real education and developement of thought are concerned, each of these three classes of children is injured by the habit of vague, wide and ambiguous questioning which is so common among teachers.

For similar reasons, it is generally necessary to abstain from giving questions to which we have no reasonable right to expect an answer. Technical terms, and information children are not likely to possess, ought not to be demanded. Nor should questions be repeated to those who cannot answer. A still more objectionable practice is that of suggesting the first word or two of a sentence, or pronouncing the first syllable of a word which the children do not recollect. All these errors generate a habit of guessing among the

scholars; and we should ever bear in mind that there is no one habit more fatal to accurate thinking, or more likely to encourage shallowness and self-deception, than this. It should be discountenanced in every possible way; and the most effective way is to study well the form of our questions, to consider well whether they are quite intelligible and unequivocal to those to whom they are addressed, and to limit them to those points on which we have a right to expect clear and definite answers.

There is a class of questions which hardly deserve the name, and which are, in fact, fictitious or apparent, but not true, questions: viz., those which simply require the answer "yes" or "no." Nineteen such questions out of twenty carry their own answers in them; for it is almost impossible to propose one without revealing, by the tone and inflection of the voice, the kind of answer you expect. For example, "Is it right to honour our parents?" "Did Abraham show much faith when he offered up his son?" "Do you think the author of the Psalms was a good man?" "Were the Pharisees really religious men?" Questions like these elicit no thought whatever: there are but two possible answers to each of them, and of these we are sure to show, by our manner of putting the question, which one we expect. Such questions should, therefore, as a general rule, be avoided, as they seldom serve any useful purpose, either in teaching or examining. For every question, it must be remembered, ought to require an effort to answer it; it may be an effort of memory, or an effort of imagination, or an effort of judgment, or an effort of perception; it may be a considerable effort, or it may

be a slight one; but it must be an effort; and a question which challenges no mental exertion whatever, and does not make the learner think, is worth nothing. Hence, however such simple affirmative and negative replies may look like work, they may co-exist with utter stagnation of mind on the part of the scholars, and with complete ignorance of what we are attempting to teach.

Questions should always follow one another in systematic order: each should seem to grow out of the answer which preceded it, and should have a clear, logical connection with it. Much of the force and value of the interrogative method is lost by a loose, unconnected, random set of inquiries. However well they may be worded, or however skilfully each separate inquiry may be designed to elicit the thought and knowledge of the learners the want of connection is a fatal defect. If the entire impression left on the mind of the learner, is to be an effective one, all that he has learned on a given subject ought to be coherent and connected. We cannot secure this without acquiring a habit of continuous and orderly questioning, so that each effort of thought made by the scholar shall be duly connected with the former and preparatory to the next. There will thus be a unity and entireness in the teaching, and what is taught will then have a reasonable chance of a permanent place in the memory. For we must ever remember that whatever is learned confusedly is remembered confusedly, and that all effective teaching must be characterized by system and continuity. Hence, in proposing questions, it is very necessary to keep in view the importance of linking

them together, of making each new answer the solution of some difficulty, which the former answer suggested but did not explain, and of arranging all questions in the exact order in which the subject would naturally develope itself in the mind of a logical and systematic thinker.

A good deal of the success of a teacher depends upon the *manner* in which questions are proposed. Perhaps the most important requisite under this head is *animation*. Slow, dull, heavy questioning wearies children, and destroys their interest in a lesson. It is by a rapid succession of questions presented in a pleasing and spirited manner, with an obvious and pervading earnestness, challenging all who seem inattentive, and so stimulating and encouraging the minds of his pupils, that the teacher will bring their powers of thought into wholesome exercise, and make his instructions the means of impressing truth upon their hearts. Hence, it is necessary to avoid long pauses, and all monotony of voice, or sluggishness of manner; to vary the phraseology of our questions, and to seek in every way to kindle interest and enthusiasm about the lesson. But, in doing this, let us remember that we cannot give more than we possess; we cannot raise the minds of others above the level of our own; and therefore it is important that our manner should show a familiarity with the subject, and that our own love for sacred truth should be so strong as to convey itself, by the mere force of sympathy, into the hearts of those whom we undertake to instruct. We have seen teachers whose cheeks glowed, and whose manner betokened deep emotion, as they spoke the words of healing and of life;

we have seen their eyes glisten with tearful joy as one pupil after another had his intellect awakened to receive the truth and his heart touched with sacred impressions. And we have known well that these were teachers who, whatever their intellectual gifts might be, were the most likely persons to obtain an entrance into the hearts of children, to exercise a right influence over them, and to find, after many days, that the seed they had thus sown in hope and fear had been watered by the divine favour and benediction and brought forth rich and glorious fruit. Of course, we must not pretend to an emotion which we do not feel, nor use an earnest manner as a mere trick of art or as a machine for making our teaching effective; but a Sunday-school teacher will never be worth much, unless his own heart kindles at the thought of the permanence and preciousness of the truths he has to teach, nor unless he feels a positive pleasure in witnessing every new proof of the unfolding of mind on the part of his class. Such feelings are sure to give vigour to his teaching, a vivid and picturesque character to his illustrations, earnestness to his manner, animation to his voice, and a quick, active and telling character to his method of questioning.

For these reasons, it seems undesirable to use a book of questions, or to have teaching notes in his hand, while he gives the lesson. (Note XI.) The value of such assistance is great, if we avail ourselves of it *beforehand*,—if it helps to systematize our own thoughts and prepare us for the right developement of the lesson. But, in the presence of the children, the use of the question-book has a chilling and depressing effect: it

destroys confidence in the teacher; prevents him from feeling at his ease, and gives a sluggish, mechanical look to the whole proceeding. (Note XII.) Whether our questions be good or bad, it is quite certain that when propounded to the class they should be *our own;* not read out of a book, or from notes, but growing spontaneously out of our own minds, and adapted not only to the peculiar character and requirements of the class, but also to the time and circumstances; to the special turn which the lesson has chanced to take, and to the particular inferences which the teacher feels it most important to draw from it. One of the first requisites in all good teaching is that the minds of the teacher and the taught should come into actual contact. The words of some one else, read or quoted to me, never can have half the force of the actual utterance of a living, present being whose own thoughts seek entrance into my mind and are intended specially to meet my needs.

We all know the difference between reading a sermon to children, and delivering orally a far inferior address, but one attended with gestures and looks and tones which prove its genuineness and give it directness of application. The same difference is noticeable in questioning; and therefore we think it far better that a teacher should make a few blunders and inaccuracies while he is educating himself into the habit of independent questioning, than that he should be rigidly exact and careful by the help of notes or books. Swimming with corks is not, strictly speaking, swimming at all; and so the reading of certain inquiries from a catechism or a book is not, in fact, questioning

at all, but an indirect and very inefficient substitute for it.

Perhaps it may be worth while to say a word or two about the answers which questions may receive. We ought not to be satisfied with obtaining a right answer from one child, nor even from the whole class collectively. In most cases it is necessary to repeat a question which has been answered, to some other child who may have appeared inattentive. And if a question is first given to one who fails to answer it, and then to another boy or girl who gives the right answer, it is generally a good plan to go back to the first child and put the same question again, in order to test his attention to what is going on in the class. We can only secure a hold upon the more indolent scholars by making each one feel that he cannot possibly escape, but that his own personal knowledge of the subject is sure to be challenged at the close of the lesson. Hence, all questions should be well distributed throughout the class, and no one child should be allowed to avoid the frequent appeals of his teacher.

Wrong answers will often be given; yet these should never make us angry, but should be reserved for a while, and shown to be incorrect by subsequent examination. Of course, if random or foolish answers are offered, it is a proof that the discipline of the class is bad, and the offence must be regarded as a breach of rule, and treated accordingly. But a mistake arising from ignorance ought never to be treated as a fault. A teacher may meet it by saying, "Will some one tell me why that answer is a wrong one?" Or, if the answer is very wide of the mark, by saying, "We will go into

that presently," or, "We will have a lesson on that subject, and you will then see why the answer was a bad one." And, in the very numerous cases in which an answer is partly wrong and partly right, or in which an answer, though right in substance, is wrong in the mere language or form of expression, it is always desirable to alter the language of our question, to propose it again to another child, to add a subordinate question or two to disentangle the precise truth, and then at last the question should be repeated in its original form, and an amended answer be required. But all this implies patience and judgment, a condescension to the weakness and obscurity of infant minds, a considerate, forbearing tone, and a constant desire to sympathize in their difficulties rather by offering a friendly help to escaping from them than by solving them at once.

It may occasionally happen to a teacher to be much vexed and puzzled because he can obtain no answer to his questions at all, or because all the answering comes from one or two prominent children. In such cases it is needless to find fault, or to complain and scold for the inattention. It is far better to look into ourselves, and see if we cannot find the reason *there* for our want of success. Perhaps we have allowed the lesson to proceed in disorder, and nothing is known simply because nothing has been taught; and in this case our own method is in fault. Or perhaps we have been asking questions above the comprehension of the children, which they are positively unable to answer, and which we have no right to ask. Or it may be that we have put our questions in an indistinct or unintelligible way. Let us always, in case of failure, suspect ourselves,

take the ignorance of the children as a censure upon our own methods, and endeavour, with God's blessing, to turn the experience of such a lesson to good account by rectifying our plans, simplifying our language, or studying more accurately the nature of the being with whom we have to deal.*

Occasionally it will be found advantageous to vary the exercise by the employment of mutual questions, by setting the children (especially of an upper class) to question one another in turn on the subject of the lesson. They will be very shy and unwilling to do this at first, but after a little practice they will learn to like it, and in the act of framing questions their own intelligence will be greatly strengthened. Lord Bacon said, "That a wise question is the half of knowledge;" and it is quite true that it takes much knowledge of a subject to enable us to put a good question upon it. Such mutual interrogation, under proper control, will therefore be, in a double sense, the test of the knowledge and of the thoughtfulness of a class.

Every encouragement should always be offered to the children to put questions to their teacher, and to give free expression to whatever difficulties or doubts may be in their minds. A good teacher will never think such questions irksome or out of place, but will welcome them and all the trouble they will bring with them as so many proofs that the minds of his pupils are at work, and so many hopeful guarantees of future success.

* If a particular member of a class is so forward as to require a check, it can usually be applied in such a way as not to alienate or offend. The judicious teacher will readily find expedients to repress forwardness and encourage timidity.

For, indeed, the whole sum of what may be said about questioning is comprised in this. It ought to set the learners thinking, to promote activity and energy on their parts, and to arouse the whole mental faculty into action, instead of blindly cultivating the memory at the expense of the higher intellectual powers.

"That is the best questioning which best stimulates action on the part of the learner,—which gives him a habit of thinking and inquiring for himself,—which tends to render him in a great measure independent of his teacher,—which makes him, in fact, not less a skilful finder than a patient receiver of truth. All our questioning should aim at this; and the success of our teaching must ever be measured, not by the amount of information we have imparted, but by the degree in which we have strengthened the judgment and enlarged the capacity of our pupils, and imparted to them that searching and inquiring spirit which is a far surer basis for all future acquisitions than any amount of mere information whatever."

It is important that we should know and observe the proper limits to the range of our questions on any particular subject. If we follow at random every path which our own questions or those of our pupils may open, we shall seldom find our way back without losing our pupils, if not ourselves. Hence sound judgment must be exercised as to the point at which interrogation in a particular vein shall cease. For example, in a lesson embracing the first few verses by the Evangelist Luke, it would not be difficult to occupy an hour in discussing the geography of Judea, another hour with

a biographical sketch of Herod, and a third with an account of the priests' courses.

The following simple principles will be found sufficient to determine these limits. 1. We are never to ramble so far as to lose sight of the main drift or subject of the lesson. 2. We are not to leave any point unexplained which is essential to give the proper point and force to the lesson. 3. We are to avoid distracting the pupil's mind by calling his attention to topics not directly relevant to the lesson.

A passage may be well understood by the class, though many questions can be asked upon it which none of them can answer. There are few Sunday-school boys or girls who would not understand the phrase "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water," and yet not one of a large class may know any thing about Samaria, or the mode of drawing water in eastern countries; and if the teacher goes interrogatively into these points with sufficient minuteness to bring out the whole force and instruction of the narrative, he probably will not get much beyond these nine words during the session. On the other hand, a case may occur in which the time of a whole session shall be more profitably expended on a single sentence than if distributed over a dozen verses.

It is obvious that while we are running upon some by-way into which we have been turned by such words as *Judea*, *Herod*, *priest*, or *temple*, or any other word which gives rise to extended associations, we are apt to lose ourselves; and when we get to the end of the road, the mind comes back wearied and distracted from its excursions, seeking for the point at which it was diverted.

It has been judiciously observed by some one, that there is a great difference between explaining a word and giving a history of what the word expresses. If we tell a child that the jail is built of granite, he may properly inquire what granite is,—whether it is iron, or wood, or earth, or stone. We explain it by telling him that it is a very hard kind of stone; but we need not tell him just then to what class of rocks it belongs, of what elements it is composed, or where it is found. This information may be useful and proper; but it does not belong to the time nor the occasion, and should therefore be withheld.

In the colloquial instruction of a class, it is sometimes necessary to pursue a vein of thought or inquiry which is unexpectedly opened by a question or answer; and in narratives there should always be sufficient minuteness of detail to give every object its proper position, while care is taken that the number of objects is not so large as to crowd the canvass.

The following is given in a foreign periodical as the actual experience of a teacher of a class of small children.

"On one night, I remember, I tried to interest and instruct my scholars by telling them short stories and asking questions upon them, expecting by so doing to be able to impress on their minds several Christian duties which might do them good; and, in doing so, I was full of hope and confidence that the more religious points I could cram into one night, the more likely would the children be to gain knowledge and feel the need of seeking God early. There is here given a sketch of what took place, as nearly as I can recollect.

Looking about, and speaking in as lively a manner as I could, I began:—'Now, little boys and girls, listen to me: I am going to tell you something. (James, lay down your cap, and listen; Jeanie, don't work with your hair just now; hear what I tell you.) I was going along a street one day, and—(John, give me that marble;—the marble was hastily crammed into the pocket,)—and I saw a little ragged boy, and he was running up and down—(Mary, you must sit still, my dear,)—and he was swearing and taking God's name in vain! Was that right?' 'No.' 'Would Jesus love those that said bad words and swore like that boy?'—No answer. (They were looking about, not listening. I made them attend.) 'Would God let people into heaven that did wrong?'

"'No—I don't know—yes.'

"'No, God will not let anybody into heaven that does not do his bidding, and that swears and breaks his commandments; and so no swearer will get to heaven." Here they became inattentive again.)—'Now, listen, and I'll tell you another story.—I saw a little boy that would not do what his mother bid him.' (A little boy, half crying,—'Johnnie says my mother begs!' 'Well, never mind that: it does neither her nor you any harm.') 'This boy, then, would not do his mother's bidding. She wanted him to go away to some place with something for her; but he said, "I'll not go;" and she asked him again; but he always said, "I'll not go." Was that boy doing right?' 'No.' 'Should he have gone when his mother bid him?' 'Yes.' 'Does God like to see children doing what their father and mother bid them?' (Here a boy cried, 'Willie Biggs steals sugar from his mother!'

Willie very stoutly answered, 'I don't!'—'You do, though!'—'It's a big lie!'—'It a'n't!') I could scarcely stop them, but said, 'Never mind that just now: all those that have done wrong, God will punish; but I want you all to do what your father and mother bid you, for God wishes boys and girls to do that. Now, William, will you do what your mother bids you?' 'No!' 'Why?' 'Because she licks me.' 'But that will be when you do wrong.' (No answer.) 'God wants you to do what she bids you. Will you not do it?' 'She licks me, though.' I had no way of getting an answer to this, and changed the subject with all speed. 'I have another story to tell you.—I saw two boys in the street, speaking very loud and angry like, and at last one of them lifted his hand and struck the other in the face, and he struck him back again; and then they fought away, striking each other till their faces were very sore and bleeding, and they hurt each other very much. Would God like to see them doing ill and hurting each other?' 'No!' 'Will not God be angry at seeing boys do ill that way?' 'Yes!' 'John, what would you do if a boy was to strike you?' 'I would give him my fist in the face!' I stood quite astonished at the unexpected issue of my question, as I had thought he would have said he would not do any thing to the boy, for God would be angry. 'But what would you strike him for? would it do you any good?'—But the class became here so disorderly that my attention was taken away from the subject, and I got no answer."

It is not difficult to detect the causes of the successive failures in this experiment. 1. The teacher's introduction of herself was too *general*. "Going along a

street, one day," gives a very indefinite idea of time and place. 2. The diversion of attention from her story about something absent and seen only in imagination, to incidents present and exciting. "The ragged boy running up and down the street" is a picture which the teacher draws of something she saw; but John and his marble are living, visible realities for them to see. 3, *and chiefly.* It was not much of a story, after all. Attention—had it been given—would have been but poorly rewarded, considering how much it costs a child to give attention to any thing for more than a minute or two; and certainly they would not feel much like listening to a second and even a third story of the same sort! Among all the objects soliciting the pupil's attention, the teacher must aim to make the object *he* or *she* presents predominant and to keep it so; and then, though a sudden incident may attract the eyes and thoughts of the class for a moment, yet, like a bent bow, they will spring back to the teacher of their own accord when the incident has passed.

§ 6. *Visiting.*

We have referred generally, in another connection, to the agency of the Sunday-school in improving the domestic and social condition of the community. The topic is considered of sufficient importance to justify a more specific discussion. There is a peculiar feature of American society which often attracts the notice of foreigners; we mean, *the early dissolution of home-ties.* The character of our institutions is favourable to enterprise and adventure. Theoretically, at least, they profess to leave the people to the largest possible liberty

consistent with the common welfare. Nothing is watched with so much jealousy or resisted with so much determination as encroachments on this liberty. The authority of our magistrates and executive officers is defined and restricted with scrupulous exactness; and, while the popular voice is heard neither faintly nor equivocally in resisting and denouncing the least stretch of official power, it is too often silent when the public peace and safety are endangered by the outrages of the lawless and disobedient.

The family is the embryo of the republic. The subordination of children to parents is a natural dictate, and is enforced by dependence. But no one can fail to notice, as a national peculiarity, that our children are impatient of these gentle and wholesome restraints, and are prematurely invested with privileges and rights which they are quite incompetent to exercise. The supplementary power formerly held by masters under indentures has become almost nominal, so impracticable has it been found to enforce the authority which is essential to the existence of such a relation. Boys and girls, not half through their teens, dispose of their own time, earn and expend their own wages, and are, to all intents and purposes, their own masters and mistresses.*

It is impossible that the domestic and social habits of a community should not be essentially modified by such customs. In the older countries of the world, and

* Not long since, a party was arrested in New York, in consequence of disorderly proceedings in a restaurant occupied by him; and it was ascertained, on investigation, that he owned the place he kept and a similar establishment in another part of the city, and was not yet twenty years old!

especially in England, families remain together much longer, and the ties of home are preserved through that critical period which intervenes between ceasing to be a child and beginning to be a man or woman. The contrast to which we refer is obvious in very trivial particulars. In the old country, men and women grown, address their parents in the same terms of affection and endearment that they used when they were little children. With us, striplings scarcely old enough to go to school use terms not more respectful than "the old man" and "the old woman" to designate their parents, and, in asking or answering questions, seldom recognise their title to any deference.

It is idle to croak about all this. It belongs to the age and state in which we live; and our aim must be to employ all legitimate means to correct what we can, and, as far as possible, to mitigate evils which are irremediable.

Among the most effective and best-adapted means for this end is the Sunday-school. However remote such a function may *seem* to be from the direct office of the Sunday-school, it is really a natural and almost necessary outgrowth of the institution.

The moment he takes his seat in the midst of a group of six, eight, or ten children, the Sunday-school teacher may discern, if he will, six, eight, or ten paths opened for him directly to as many homes, in each of which he can make himself a welcome and useful visitor.

"As there are muscles, veins, arteries and nerves which connect the head in its proud elevation with the feet in their low position," so there are connections

which hold together all ranks of society, the overlooking of which involves monstrous evils. Hence, we need not only praying teachers and teaching teachers, but *visiting* teachers.

There are, perhaps, few duties connected with the office of the Sunday-school teacher, upon which theory is so correct and uniform, and practice so diverse and defective as this. It is very rare to find a teacher who will not admit cheerfully, and to the full extent, the obligation to visit, at stated and frequent intervals, the members of his class; and it is almost as rare to find one who carries out his own convictions of duty.

We cannot better bring to view the general principles on which the duty under consideration is enforced, than by adopting substantially the language of one who evidently speaks from deep conviction.

"Sunday-school visiting brings us in the very kindliest attitude and under the most favourable circumstances before the parents of our pupils. I assume that he whose mind is alive to the importance of saving a child's soul will be equally alive to that of benefiting, if in his power, the child's parent also. Now, half our point is gained if those persons to whom our visits are paid look upon us with a kind eye,—if at the first they have a favourable impression of us. For want of this, many a pastoral and Christian visit has proved almost worse than useless, owing to a kind of suspicion that unhappily leavens the disposition of many. But what suspicion can there be when you come to benefit the man's child? When you come (as he must well know) without reward or fee of any kind? When your only aim is the good of one connected in the most

endearing bonds with him? And thus there is oftentimes opened out to the Sunday-school teacher a way of usefulness closed even to the minister of the gospel,—an opportunity of dropping a word in season, or speaking to the parents through the child,—of winning the affections of the man to religion as a thing of sympathy and love and heart. In fact, the homes of each teacher's class ought to be his little parish, and the children in them ought to be his young missionaries, through whom, insensibly and unostentatiously, (and therefore not offensively,) religion and knowledge are poured out upon the family, just as the dew of heaven is invisibly yet powerfully distilled over the dry and parched fields.

"Visiting has a claim upon us as a test of the earnestness of our work; for it tries us as to whether we are willing to carry it out to the full extent of its usefulness; whether we dive into the good that is beneath the mere surface; whether we are willing to stretch ourselves out into its collateral calls; and whether we are willing to take rough work as well as smooth. Now, in all these points, this matter is somewhat of a severe test: it draws upon one's time and one's energy, and oftentimes upon one's feelings of nicety; it brings us into strange places and into contact with strange people; but, for all this, when circumstances make it possible, its claim ought to be both recognised in theory and acted upon in practice.

"We must not forget, either, that visiting is actually necessary for the efficiency of our work. It carries the Sunday into the weekdays; it helps to make a child connect what he has been taught with his every-day

life: the very sight of a teacher does him a world of good, for the teacher is connected with what he teaches, and, by the law of association, the one reminds him of the other.

"And it is in a weekday visit that we can best learn something of our children's temporal wants. We cannot give much time on Sunday to inquiring into this point: it disturbs and disarranges the remainder of the class. Besides, a child will not tell his wants before others, and, except this, you have no opportunity of speaking to him alone. And this point also (most necessary to the efficiency of Sunday-school teaching in most cases) is accomplished: you are in communication (and the child knows it) with the parent. You hear of some faults, week-day sins, traits of character and disposition, all which will afford matter of suggestion for the Sunday's lesson,—giving you more to speak on than you have time for, and giving you, what so many find it so hard to make out, a practical application for your subject,—one not shot at random, but shot with a fixed aim, coming home to the heart and conscience because it comes home to the experience also.

"We would urge the practice of visiting from this consideration also, viz.:—*The benefits it confers.*—There is thus acquired a great check over our pupil both at school and at home: he will not be so apt to be noisy and badly-behaved at school if there is any chance of our calling and letting his father or mother know of it during the week, nor will he be likely to be so unrestrained at home who knows that we very possibly may be informed of it. There is a double check arising, from

school to home, and from home to school. And what so likely to insure a good attendance as this? Go into many of our schools and look at the roll-register, and in classes of eleven to twelve you have an average attendance of perhaps from five to seven,—the latter (as things are managed) considered pretty fair. But this is not pretty fair, but very bad: it is like a body with only one eye, one arm and one leg, and, as the teacher is often absent himself, we may almost say with only half a head; and all this could be rectified so easily by a little judicious visiting! We know from experience that children will not be absent on the Sunday if they are sure to be 'looked up' during the week, and false excuses brought to light.

"Thus, too, the child is won by familiar conversation. This, of course, can never be indulged in at the school. There are many little questions to be asked and things inquired into, which prove a teacher's sympathy with and interest in a child, all which must be done at home; for then the teacher appears not merely in his official capacity, but, if we may so speak, as a neighbour and friend. Now, this is a point above all others to be gained. Once persuade a boy that you are his friend, and your teaching is half accomplished; his ears are opened to listen, and, what is better, his affections and his heart are ready to receive instruction. And this point is to be gained oftentimes by visiting our children in their own houses, asking after their brothers and sisters, &c.; for all this proves to a child that his teacher has a heart, that he not only teaches, but feels, and this will accomplish its own work.

"And it would be very easy to show the teacher

that he himself is a considerable gainer by adopting a system of visitation to the homes of his class. His own mind is enlarged, and he will then read characters, not from some mere book of ink and paper, but he will have it from the fountain-head,—not knowing so much what other people have seen, but what he sees himself. Character is very hardly learned; and he who would educate a child successfully must know something from actual sight of the dangers to which that child may be exposed, and the peculiar circumstances in which he is likely to be placed. If we know nothing of the character of our children's homes, we are too often only teaching by general rules and some fancied first principles, which may be true enough in themselves, and yet, for want of a little of this knowledge, are utterly useless,—the teacher knowing nothing of the way in which they are to be applied.

"And is it no advantage that thus a teacher's feelings are drawn out, and that he gains an insight into character generally,—that he learns to feel from actual sight, and not from the hearsay of another? Are not his love, his pity, his patience, his energy, all improved from actual practice? These are great gains; and when we add that thus the teacher gets an advantage over the child, disarming him of his prejudices and winning his love, we think it will need no further proof to show that visiting is an important and an eminently reproductive part of Sunday-school work.

"A word or two now on the method in which this is to be carried on. First, we would have the teacher observe certain circumstances under which visits ought to be paid. One is on the absence of the child. This

is a good opportunity: it evinces to the parents your spirit of anxiety about their child's welfare, and to the child himself your spirit of vigilance. If possible, let the visit be paid the week following the session from which the child was absent: there is something very summary in this, and what is summary is in general striking and very often effectual. It is a kind of taking the defaulter by storm, and will, doubtless, have a good effect. Another opportunity is on the sickness of any child. This is so favourable for your purpose that it must not, by any means, be omitted. Neglect six defaulters in preference to neglecting one sick child; for when sickness comes the heart is soft and a kindness is of tenfold value. We know of a Sunday-school teacher, in our own neighbourhood, who went to see after his sick child. The parents were in the lowest depths of poverty and wretchedness: they had two or three logs of wood to sit on, and in the room was one broken chair. On the first visit, not much attention was paid to him; perhaps parents and child, not being used to such a thing, thought it rather odd; but, as the visits were repeated, they became gradually better understood, until at last the old chair was always wiped down and brought for the teacher to sit upon, and a piece of old board put across the seat to prevent him falling through. And there, time after time, he sat, and that old chair was more honourable to him than a throne, and that wretched room than a palace studded with Eastern gems and resplendent with gold of Ophir. But the good of the visit was seen by-and-by. The parents came to church and became more anxious; and, although this boy was of a rugged disposition, some

time after, when he heard at Sunday-school that his teacher was suddenly called away to attend a parent's death-bed, he returned home bathed in tears; for his heart had been touched by the kindness that the teacher had once shown to him. The sickness of a child is a golden opportunity for the teacher: God himself ploughs up the ground, and he must not withhold the seed.

"'A few years back,' says a teacher, 'I had a boy whose parents were respectable, but very careless respecting his attendance at the school, and seldom at any place of worship, spending the Sabbath, as too many others do, out on pleasure. By my continual calling upon the youth and persevering efforts for his attendance, and by conversation with the parents, they were led to think that there must be something (to use their own words) good in the school.

"'I got the boy to be regular and in time morning and afternoon, and the parents to frequent a place of worship; and after a short time the father joined the school as a teacher, and turned out a most pious, excellent man, and an active distributor of tracts on Sabbath mornings also. I was at this time engaged from half-past eight in the morning till seven at night.' This is only one result of visiting the children out of many others that could be named. Some may plead want of time. Surely all could spare a few minutes.

"And what method shall we adopt in thus visiting our children? asks some one. Let us be very careful ever to set about our work with a tenderness of spirit. Even where reproof is to be administered, let it be done with kindness of look and speech. The connection between a

teacher and his scholar in a Sunday-school is so voluntary that any thing of a magisterial or hard spirit seems peculiarly out of place. Let us leave upon the parents' minds as strong an impression as we can of the fact that this is a voluntary office, a work and labour of *love;* let us teach them on such occasions how much the gain is on their side, and it will in many cases shame them into a seeing after the regularity of their children's attendance at school, and their conduct out of it. And let us always go with a specific end in view, and not lose sight of that. It may be to censure or to praise, or to inquire about the conduct of our pupils; but, whatever it be, let it be accomplished before we leave the house; and finally, let it be done, as far as possible, systematically. A great point will have been gained if teachers will only think over this part of their duty. And assuredly, though it may be toilsome and inconvenient, it will bring its reward; for the good cause will prosper so much the more, and perhaps souls will be won. And, if nothing else, this at least will be gained. We shall become more elevated in holy sympathy, more expanded in the circle of our experience, more alive to the claims and duties of the vastness of social life: we shall acquire a true catholicity of spirit, which pervades for good the class below as well as our own and the class above us, and, while it seeks communion with the thrones and principalities and powers above and the fellowship of prophets and the noble army of martyrs and the glorious company of the apostles, stoops, in love and charity and brotherhood, to the family and child of low degree."

Passing from these general views, it may be observed that the impediments to the discharge of so obvious a duty are, for the most part, quite imaginary. Some persons decline attempting to visit the homes of their pupils, because they think their awkwardness or embarrassment will rather tend to diminish than increase any respect that is felt for them. When a duty is clearly prescribed by the providence of God, it is better to go forward in the discharge of it, trusting in strength and wisdom not our own, to give us understanding and utterance. We may be led, by a way that we know not, into a path of unexpected usefulness.

Few teachers, probably, estimate properly the opportunity which a visit affords for aiding their own work. How discouraging and almost fruitless are the attempts we often make to enforce obedience to our requirements or to the rules of the school! We are not disposed to come into direct collision with a pupil, if it is possible to avoid it; but the good order of the class and of the school requires the subjection of every member to the constituted authority. To wink at disobedience is to invite insubordination and disorder, and to inflict irreparable injury on those who have been properly trained at home. But you have a child in your class who has never obeyed anybody. The command of his father or mother is as the idle wind to him, unless the fear of a blow attends it; and this he does not expect at the Sunday-school. Is it to be wondered at that he contemns your authority and sets at naught your reproof?

You are at his home. He is not in. His mother and one or two of the small children are about, and you

say something about Jemmy, which leads her to ask how he gets along at the school.

"He seems to be a clever boy enough, if he would only mind," you reply: "but he is quite troublesome in that respect. He seems to be set to have his own way."

"Yes, indeed," she says: "the dear knows I have trouble enough with him for that."

"Well, we must try to teach him obedience; for without that we can have no comfort or peace. You know God has put the people of the world into families, and given parents complete authority over their children, for the very purpose of having them taught obedience among the very first lessons of life. We could have no peace in our homes if every one had his own way; and if obedience is not learned in childhood it is seldom learned at all. If we don't make Jemmy obedient to us, it is very likely he will break the laws of the country and give you more trouble than you can bear. He can be a good boy and grow up a useful man and a good citizen, but not if he refuses obedience to his parents; for this lies at the bottom of all other obedience."

Such a conversation would never be regarded as impertinent when connected with such a visit; and probably no other person in the world could give it the force and effect which it has from the lips of Jemmy's Sunday-school teacher. The same may be said of personal habits, cleanliness, tidiness of clothes, purity of speech, &c. Children who are accustomed from infancy to dirt, filth and slovenliness, and to profaneness and vulgarity, can hardly appreciate a reproof

which a comparative stranger gives them once a week. Your access to the child's home supplies a most desirable opportunity to correct the evil at the fountain-head. You can speak, without giving offence, of your regret that Patrick should appear to disadvantage in the class from having a dirty face or a torn jacket, and signify your wish that, for his sake, a little more attention should be paid to his appearance. The excuses and apologies of the mother open the way for pointing out to her how she can accomplish the end you have in view; and, if she has ability and time to read, you could follow up your counsel by sending to her from the library a copy of "The Working-Man and his Friends," or "The Labourer's Wife," or "The Cottagers Contrasted," or "The Two Carpenters," or something else to impress and enforce what you have said. There is no limit to the influence which judicious Sunday-school teachers can exert on the moral and social well-being of those classes of the community that are most numerously represented in our schools. And there is no influence exerted outside of the school-room which is more certain to be felt re-acting on the school itself than this.

It may be said, perhaps, without exaggeration, that wherever the offices of the Sunday-school system are developed in their proper order and harmony, its power to open avenues to the confidence and affections of all orders and conditions of people, and to distribute through them the gentle sympathies and elevating influences of Christian benevolence, will be regarded as one of its grandest and most attractive features.

It is impossible for any teacher to know a pupil as he should who does not see him elsewhere than at school

on Sunday. The child's position there may be regarded as an artificial one. His person and apparel are generally clean,—which of itself has a restraining influence upon him. He is surrounded by circumstances favourable to the display of his better qualities,—if he has them. Temptations to do wrong, or to show an evil temper, are few and comparatively weak. So, on the other hand, the things that discourage and dishearten a child, his exposure to evil examples, the hinderances to his improvement, and the peculiarities of physical constitution, are seldom disclosed in the intercourse of the school-room; and hence it is that so much of the teaching there misses its mark, or is like water spilled upon the ground, that cannot be gathered up. The advantage which a teacher has who is familiar with the domestic condition and circumstances of his pupil, over one who is ignorant of them, is felt at every turn. In impressing upon John his obligation to be a help and comfort to his widowed mother, he can expatiate on the sacredness of the relation as ordained of God,—a course of instruction not so much needed by John as by the boy who sits opposite, and who, as the teacher has reason to know, is very disobedient and unkind to his mother,—a fact not disclosed at school, but by the mother herself with a flood of tears and an almost broken heart. The adaptation of every lesson to the peculiar circumstances of some individual pupil is among the things to be greatly desired.

A little boy attending an infant-school was an object of frequent observation and interest to strangers. He had a fine, intelligent face, a very musical voice, and altogether uncommonly agreeable ways. He was in the care of an aunt, in somewhat indigent circum-

stances but respectable in character. The mother of the little boy was an itinerant play-actor; and, as she could not pursue such an occupation while she had the care of her children, she put them to board with such of her relatives as were willing to take them. The teacher of the infant-school ascertained the facts by visiting the aunt, and further learned that it was the mother's intention to take this child to herself again as soon as he was old enough to be trained for the stage. The teacher seized the opportunity to exert a counteracting influence; and, as the child was not aware of his mother's mode of life, there was no need of any scruples in speaking of its sin and temptations. She would tell the class the story of Slim Jack, or give them an account of the burning of the Richmond Theatre, or warn them against any occupation that should bring them into association with vain and wicked persons, &c. &c. Perhaps it was all in vain, and the little fellow may live and die a play-actor; but our purpose in citing the case is to show how the knowledge which home-visitation alone supplies contributes to the teacher's usefulness.

The collateral opportunities of usefulness, aside from the direct benefit of the pupil and his household, are not to be undervalued. When the teacher is there, it will be well for him to look about and ascertain what may be the condition of his pupil's neighbours and playmates. How easy to ask, "Who lives in the cellar below, or in the tenement next door?" or, "What families are there down the court? Do the children all go to Sunday-school?" "Why, yes," will perhaps be the answer: "they all go to some school or other, or profess

to go, unless it be two or three ragged little things that live in that dirty cellar across the way." Ah! there again is another opening; another call:—"Come over, and help us!" And doubtless he will gird up his loins and go, and will be assured that, if he lifts up his heart and asks Jesus to be his companion, he will not let him go alone.

Perhaps some one of our readers may be almost persuaded to try once more what he can do, though he has often resolved and as often shrunk from the attempt. Let the attempt be made in full confidence that his work of faith and labour of love will be accepted. Suppose he should say next Sunday, (not beginning with the most hopeful case,) "Mary, I think I shall call and see you some evening this week." "Will you, teacher?" Mary replies; and she looks first at you, and then at the floor, and then at you again,—till her eye begins to moisten and fill; and the drop that runs over might probably say, "Teacher little knows what a poor wicked father I have, and what a comfortless home; but I hope she'll come." Or, if you were to address one of your hard-looking lads in a similar strain, you would not make him *cry*, perhaps,—in fact, the poor fellow scarcely knows how to cry,—but there would be a telling smile all over his rough face, and if he knew what time the visit was to come off, he would be slily looking round some corner not far away.

The habit of free and friendly visitation among the less favoured classes by individuals higher in station, is one which, even independently of religious purposes, cannot fail to be productive of good. It tends wonderfully to soften the asperities of feeling produced in the

hearts of many who regard themselves as cut off, by an adverse fate, from their fair share of the happiness of life. To go among such with a cheerful countenance, to offer sympathy and occasional help, revives hope in hearts that were becoming callous to every thing gentle and virtuous or were rankling with bitterness and disaffection.

The late Dr. J. A. James, in an address to his people not long before his death, expressed the conviction that "No minister of Christ can, at the last, render a satisfactory account of the complete discharge of his office, who has been wanting in the duty of private visitation."

It was a favourite maxim of Dr. Chalmers that "A house-going minister makes a church-going people." We suppose the proportion of time devoted to the various duties of the ministerial office must be governed by circumstances, and that what would serve very well in one congregation would be out of place in another. Persons of a social turn may be tempted to neglect other duties and to overdo this, while the reserved and studious may err in the opposite direction. It was the custom of Richard Baxter to visit fourteen families every week. The teacher's little congregation makes no such exorbitant claim on his time. An hour or two in the week will suffice in most cases; and there are few persons engaged in Sunday-schools who do not give that measure of time to purposes not more important than the discharge of such a duty. (Note XIII.)

It may perhaps serve to impress the minds of some teachers with the importance of this branch of their duty, and with the painful regrets which a neglect of it

sometimes occasions, if we subjoin a brief narrative in verse which a foreign periodical supplies:—

It was a Sabbath evening: the teacher's work was done;
To God he breathed his evening prayer, but for himself alone,
Then lightly laid him down to sleep,—"to sleep, but not to rest:"
For dark and troubled visions scared all quiet from his breast.

He thought he seem'd to stand in a dark, deserted room;
A feeble, flickering taper scarce relieved the cheerless gloom;
Upon a bed—how throbb'd his heart!—a scholar dying lay,—
A girl long absent,—left alone, life ebbing fast away.

Loud roar'd the angry tempest, and shook the crazy door,
And swept in chilly gusts across the unwashen floor,
And scarce the scanty coverlet could shield her from the blast;
But, while the storm was wild without, within all strife was past.

For smiles of more than earthly joy illumed her pallid cheek,
And gleams of heavenly rapture told the bliss she could not speak,
And oft her faltering notes she tuned to praise the God above,
Or sang, "My sin is wash'd away through the Redeemer's love."

At length her teacher's name she call'd—his heart fill'd to the brim:—
"I know not if he prays for *me*, but I will pray for *him*:
Oh, grant him light to guide his steps, and love to warm his heart,
And grace to teach souls perishing to choose the better part."

He started from his slumbers. The night was dark and wild,
But, conscience-struck, in haste he sought to see the dying child.
Too late, alas! A stranger's hand had closed her fading eye,
And no kind teacher had there been to see the orphan die.

§ 7. *Meetings of teachers for social or devotional purposes.*

Seasons of social and devotional intercourse among those who are embarked together in the same Christian enterprise have been found of much service. The advantages of such associations are too obvious to have

escaped the notice of those who are engaged in pursuits of mere worldly or secular interest. The various trades, professions and occupations have appropriate organizations through which to diffuse sympathy and to secure an *esprit du corps*. It is to be regretted that in many instances the professed followers of Christ have found in these human organizations the supply of wants which they sought in vain from Christian society, and especially from the divine institution of the church. Perhaps their expectations were exorbitant; possibly their position was not auspicious to the full development of the benefits of the relation; and not improbably they failed to seek the sympathy and fellowship which (if sought) would have been promptly and cheerfully accorded. At all events, we cannot doubt that the offices of Christianity are intended to embrace all the relations and interests of the race, and to bind together in one loving brotherhood the whole human family. Of course, the more closely different groups are associated by a common pursuit or occupation, the more intimate will be their sympathies. Sunday-school teachers have found eminent advantages to result from such a union of counsels, efforts and prayers. They have been encouraged and stimulated by a comparison of labours and successes, and have felt their zeal kindled by the thought that they were acting in concert with many hundreds of thousands

> "Whose fears and hopes and aims are one,—
> Their comforts and their cares."

The methods of conducting meetings of this kind have been often discussed, and are given in detail in

various manuals. It is enough for the purposes of this volume to offer a few general suggestions, with the hope of inducing further inquiry and reflection.

It has been our privilege to attend many teachers' meetings; and not unfrequently we have had the responsibility of conducting them. The general hinderances to their interest and success are not hidden. The teaching-corps of most of our Sunday-schools is composed of persons of different capacity, age, education, temperament, &c. Sometimes those who know most and could add most to the interest and profitableness of such a meeting are the most reserved, while a forward, loquacious member will absorb much more than his share of time. One may be very inquisitive, or disposed to controversy and speculation, while another may be very credulous and susceptible. It requires no little tact to bring such materials into useful combination; and we must say that we never have known a teachers' meeting to fail where this tact was shown in its management. It has fallen to our lot more than once to attend such a meeting, where fifteen or twenty teachers of both sexes were assembled with the superintendent, and it was freely admitted that none but the superintendent knew on what passage they were met to meditate. Not a person present had made it the subject of a moment's study or thought. The superintendent read the first verse, and observed that there was nothing in it which required remark. He then called on the first teacher at his right to read the next verse and say what he thought about it; and so the thirteen verses of the lesson were all read without a single word of comment. Then came a painful pause,

"Have the teachers any questions to ask?" inquired the worthy superintendent. Another painful pause. "Perhaps brother Jones would favour the meeting with a few remarks." Brother Jones's known volubility when his mouth has once fairly opened relieved the meeting of any further fear of pauses during the evening. But it would be difficult for the most attentive teacher to gather a thought or expression, from all he said, that would aid him in next Sunday's service. A meeting so conducted would have no attractions for intelligent teachers.

Sometimes teachers' meetings have failed in consequence of turning them into occasions of prayer and exhortation. These are invaluable in their place and season; but they do not answer as a substitute for study, or for a lively and well-sustained discussion of points suggested by a Sunday-school lesson,—which is the grand object of a weekly teachers' meeting.

One who maintained a profitable meeting of this kind for the space of sixteen years tells us he was accustomed to have all needful preparation made in the form of questions, concise enough to be taken down by the assembled teachers, and at the same time comprehensive enough to take in the subject-matter of each verse. At the meeting he proposes one of the questions, which the teachers enter in their note-book, and at the same time suggests an answer, with such explanations or comments as he thinks proper. The teachers are then asked for their views, or for parallel passages; and the production of these leads to other questions and further discussion. The control of the meeting is, however, retained by the conductor so far

as to allow time for each verse of the lesson to be examined more or less critically, and materials enough accumulated for the next Sunday's necessities.

As a variation from this plan, it has sometimes been found best for the conductor of the meeting to ask the first question, and the answerer of this to ask the next,—thus requiring each teacher in turn to answer and ask questions. By another plan, which was pursued successfully for fifteen years, one of the teachers was required to come prepared with just such questions as he would ask his class; and the other teachers resolved themselves into a class and put themselves as far as possible in the condition in which children are supposed to be, asking such questions and making such replies as they fancied a child would make. It is unquestionably a great matter for a teacher to discern quickly the *point* of instruction, and to frame skilfully the questions which shall be most likely to bring it into view. Not less important is it to perceive quickly the defect of an answer and supply it without mortifying or discouraging the pupil.

Other things being equal, we should regard that plan of a teachers' meeting most eligible which threw the members most upon their own resources, and which was so conducted as to make the gain of the meeting, whatever it is, common to all. The teacher who has had little time for preparation, and who is unaccustomed to very close attention or analysis, should never go away from such a meeting without feeling conscious of the acquisition of knowledge useful to him *as a teacher*.

We are told of a school comprising one thousand children of both sexes, which was attended with re-

markable success. It is said the scholars never left on account of age, but, when old enough to be teachers, preferred to remain in the class as pupils. The secret of this success was supposed to lie very much in a teachers' meeting punctually attended and well conducted. The teachers were supplied with written questions upon the lesson, which they were expected to answer in writing; and these answers furnished materials for interesting discussion. Their minds were thus healthfully exercised, and they learned practically the art of exciting the minds of children and thus giving them an interest in school-exercises.

It is perhaps unnecessary to say that an adherence to the simple purposes of a teachers' meeting is quite important to its success. Social intercourse may be enjoyed at suitable times and places; but the Sunday-school teachers' meeting should be confined strictly to the preparation of the mind and heart for the specific duties of the Sabbath. To make it the medium of forming acquaintances or intimacies not otherwise likely to be formed, or to convert it into a pleasure-party, is a grave abuse.

It may not be out of place to say a word or two in this connection on the great subject of devotional exercise in Sunday-schools.

Teachers are often called to lead the prayers of others,—sometimes in the school, sometimes in the weekly or monthly prayer-meetings, sometimes in the occasional private interviews with the class, and still oftener with an individual pupil who may be sick, or thoughtful, or careless. To be able to officiate to the edification of others is very desirable; and to attempt such a

service without proper preparation and skill is presumptuous. It is to be feared that children often contract habits of irreverence, if not of contempt, for the offices of divine worship, by the manner in which they are often discharged in our Sunday-schools. Sometimes a whole class may be observed in some frivolous or mischievous acts,—whispering, reading a book, showing a picture or toy, playing with a pin or a penknife, or trying to make others play or laugh. In well-ordered schools such conduct is not so open; but, unless great care is taken, much of the value of such an exercise will be lost, or much offence given to the divine majesty.

The language of all social prayer should be such as is likely to express the desires of the persons engaged as they would express them, or, at least, such as they will readily recognise as an expression of their desires. If the prayers are offered by one on behalf of an assembly of children, they should be couched in language which those engaged could intelligently adopt as their own. The sins confessed should be such as children are conscious of, and the blessings asked or acknowledged should be those which children esteem to be blessings.

The person who speaks is a mere mouth-piece of the rest, like the chairman of some delegation. It is not *his* wishes, but *theirs*, that are offered; not *his* sins, but *theirs*, which are confessed; not *his* fears and doubts and hopes, but *theirs*, which are presented to the compassionate Jesus. Brevity and simplicity should be studied.

It requires but little attention to the habits of thought and expression which prevail among children, to gain a knowledge of their peculiarities. Simplicity and directness are auspicious. Their figurative language is

drawn very much from the things they see and hear. A little boy of five once introduced into his evening prayer this expression:—"O God! grant that I may stick to thee as the snail stuck to the rock to-day, that couldn't be got off!"

The time occupied should be so brief that a child's attention shall not be wearied nor diverted. It helps a child to understand and unite in a prayer when the sentences are short and each distinctly uttered. The Lord's Prayer is a perfect model in this as in other respects. We are told of one who, after a brief address at the close of a school-session, raised his hands, saying, devoutly, "Let us pray." He looked up, and reverently uttered these words:—"Lord, this night forgive and bless each boy and girl in this school, all for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen." One of the boys, in the fulness of his heart, exclaimed, loud enough to be heard by several, "That's the best prayer I ever heard!"

It should be the aim of the superintendent and teachers of every Sunday-school to give to prayer the aspect of a most precious privilege. Perhaps nothing of the like importance is made a subject of less systematic attention; and when it is considered how large a share it has in the nourishment and growth of the soul in its whole probationary course, and how high a place it occupies in the column of Christian duties, such neglect seems quite inexplicable.

It is scarcely needful to say that the tone and manner of one who leads in prayer should be reverential. Every word should be distinctly pronounced, and clearly heard by the whole assembly. An inaudible commencement, all affected emotion, and every thing like a drawling,

whining, sing-song, or monotonous manner should be studiously avoided.

§ 8. *Diffusion of Sunday-school influence.*

It has often been an interesting inquiry in Sunday-school circles how far the parents and neighbours of those represented in the Sunday-school should be embraced in the plans of the school. In places where the monthly concert is observed, the services are well attended by parents, and the season is often made one of peculiar interest. In some places, teachers and children unite in the weekly or monthly prayer-meeting; but in most cases, it is believed, teachers alone constitute the attendants. Much must be left to the judgment and discretion of those immediately concerned. As an encouragement to give the widest diffusion that is practicable to all good influences, and also as an illustration of the extent to which a "a little candle can throw its beams" in our dark and "naughty world," we present a case, the perfect authenticity of which we have no reason to doubt.

"In my recollections of the past, there is nothing which affords me more real pleasure than our weekly prayer-meetings. These gatherings for prayer may be regarded as a Sunday-school thermometer, showing the life and heat it contains. The amount of spiritual good being carried on may be generally gauged by the number and fervour of our teachers at a prayer-meeting. We cannot hope that there is much love for the work, much spiritual zeal in our souls, if the prayer-meeting be neglected. In the school in which I was engaged, these seasons were always reckoned among our happiest

hours. There was not one of us who did not have to work hard for his daily bread, and some had to walk a distance of two miles after the labours of the day; and yet so animating, so refreshing, were these meetings, that they were always well attended. At one of them, I remember, our superintendent was absent in consequence of indisposition, and one of our senior teachers presided in his stead. He read and commented on the 14th of Luke, and threw out some very important practical remarks. Coming to the 13th verse,—'But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind,' he said, 'We have had many spiritual feasts in this school:—what a pity it is that we should be contented to keep the relish to ourselves! I have often thought that if we were to call in the parents and neighbours, it would render our repast still more delightful to ourselves, as well as, by God's blessing, might stimulate some to inquire their way to Zion, whose faces are not now thitherward.'

"The hint was no sooner given than it was acted upon. The same night it was resolved that the parents should be invited to attend our meetings for prayer; but, alas! it was with them then as it is now,—the great majority of them were more solicitous about the meat that perisheth than that which endureth unto everlasting life. The invitation was not responded to, and we were obliged to have recourse to another expedient. As the parents would not come to us, we determined to go to them. Some of them, we knew, felt interested in the school, and would be ready, if it was in their power, to do us a service. A few of these were waited upon, and asked to open their rooms to our accommodation one

hour in the week, we undertaking to make a small remuneration for lighting and trouble. Our application was successful. A room was obtained, and the neighbours were invited to attend for religious worship. The result exceeded our expectations. At our first meeting, the room was tolerably full; a solemn feeling seemed to pervade the assembly, and much interest appeared to be excited by the earnestness of those who addressed the throne of grace. The parents saw, evidently, that we were deeply concerned for the welfare of their children; and I believe that we raised ourselves that night in their estimation. We left under a deep conviction that God had been present with us, and that this effort to bring the gospel to the homes of the poor would not be in vain in the Lord.

"At one of these humble assemblies, I observed in a corner of the room a young man, whose every look and gesture displayed the greatest wonder at our proceedings. His outstretched head and restless eyes, as we sang and prayed, indicated that he had never before heard the praises of God sung in company, or the majesty of heaven addressed in extemporaneous words. He was clothed in what appeared to be an old working-suit, but which was, in fact, his holiday attire. He had come washed and dressed for the occasion. There were black circles, however, about his eyes which had escaped the cleansing-process; and from these and his general appearance I judged that he was a chimney-sweep. Subsequent inquiries proved that it was so. After the service, we conversed with him, and found that he was totally unlettered, and amazingly ignorant of the gospel of salvation. He told us that he became a climbing-

boy at six years of age, and continued so until he had grown too bulky to ascend a chimney, when he was made a kind of foreman over the younger ones. He had never been to school or to a place of worship in his life; nor did he know of a chimney-sweep that was more fortunate in this respect than himself. We invited him to attend the school on the Sabbath, and offered to teach him to read. This invitation he accepted; and he soon proved one of our most promising scholars. He attended all our meetings, and became so interested in the school that I believe he was never absent when there was any thing going on. The instruction and example of the teachers were not lost upon him. It soon became apparent that the work of grace had commenced in his soul, and hopes were entertained that he would ultimately become a burning and a shining light among the class of persons with whom, in the providence of God, his lot had been cast.

"It happened, on one of our appointed meetings for prayer, that an important assembly of Sunday-school teachers was to be held, and most of our friends were desirous of being present. It was therefore arranged that I and a senior teacher should conduct the service by ourselves. I attended; but my companion was unavoidably absent. Being very young, and the room being unusually full, I was much perplexed how to proceed. I could manage to lead the prayer; but to expound the Scriptures was a thing I had never attempted. Fortunately, on that evening I had been reading Brown's commentary upon the parable of the ten virgins, and, having most of the ideas well stored in my memory, I resolved to bring them forth from their

hiding-place and to spread them out to the best of my ability for the benefit of my auditory. In this I succeeded better than I had anticipated, and even ventured to advance an idea or two of my own. My congregation listened with attention; but, having exhausted my budget, I was compelled to conclude my remarks, though my companion had not arrived, and I had not occupied more than half of the hour. Having offered prayer, and sung a long hymn to fill up the time, and no assistant appearing, I ventured to call upon my friend the sweep for the second prayer,—fearing, however, that he would decline, as he had never before prayed in public. To my great comfort, he consented; and I was much struck with the fervour and simplicity of his supplications, as well as his somewhat familiar acquaintance with gospel truth. If his grammar was defective, his theology was good; and if his prayer did not display much learning of the head, it evinced deep feeling of the heart. Among other petitions, I remember he offered one for me. 'O Lord!' he said, 'bless the young man as is come to teach us to-night. He is a great deal more learned than us, and knows more about the Bible. Bless what he has said to us, and what he says to the children in the Sunday-school; and may thy Spirit teach him to teach others about that blessed Saviour who came to preach to the poor, and show them how they may be made very rich and very happy without a shilling of money.' The artless simplicity of the sweep, together with his earnestness, seemed to make a deep impression on every mind; and one woman, who had been long living in sin, was, through the instrumentality of that meeting, led to

resign the weapons of her rebellion and to become the willing captive of the triumphant grace of Christ.

"On the following Sabbath, having reported progress to my fellow-teachers, it was determined to do something towards placing our new friend, and now fellow-labourer, in more comfortable circumstances. Sweeping-machines had at this time been brought into use, and the more humane of our matrons and housekeepers objected to the employment of climbing-boys; so that those who were fortunate enough to obtain possession of one of these machines were reaping an abundant harvest. Our friend was not among the successful few. The article was too expensive for his means. A subscription was therefore commenced for the purpose of obtaining for him the desired instrument; and this having been accomplished, and there being an unoccupied cellar beneath the school, of which the teachers put him into possession, he soon became a thriving man.

"Nor were these the only fruits that were gathered from this branch which had thus happily run over the wall. One of our number, a kind-hearted and truly pious man, feeling deeply interested in the wondrous change which had taken place in the chimney-sweep, began to turn his benevolent eyes towards others of that fraternity, who were living within no great distance from the school, with a view to raise them from the moral degradation into which they were sunk. He visited the courts where they resided, and his heart was filled with grief when he beheld the wretchedness and ignorance which everywhere prevailed among them. Being a man of energy and decision, he at once com-

menced the work of reformation. Associating with him his friend the sweep, who had accompanied him in his visits to the abodes of these wretched children, he opened a room in one of their courts, and invited all the sweeps in the neighbourhood to come and receive instruction. Many persons have claimed the honour of having been the first to open a Ragged-school in London; but the honour seems to belong to this man. This was to all intents and purposes a Ragged-school, and must have been commenced prior to the year 1820. The work of instruction rapidly progressed; and the children, having before them the example of one of their own brethren, soon became more cleanly in their habits, and black skins and sooty clothes gave place to clean faces and decent apparel. I have seen and conversed with persons who received the only instruction they ever had in this school, and can testify to the moral and spiritual benefits which have resulted from the labours of this honoured servant of God in this place.

"Encouraged by the success which had attended his efforts, our friend sought to widen the sphere of his usefulness. Another room was opened, much larger than the former, where all children were admitted to receive instruction whose moral condition unfitted them for association with the youth in our regular Sabbath-schools. Prosperity again smiled upon our friend. Numbers pressed forward for instruction. The room soon became inconveniently crowded; and this devoted friend of children was rewarded for his toils by living to see many of his scholars become pious heads of families and active servants in the vineyard of Christ.

From a published report it appears that this school had one hundred and sixty-eight children under instruction, and was also well provided with teachers.

"Such were the pleasing results that attended the institution of this prayer-meeting,—an effort that was attended with no additional labour, and which involved very little extra expense, but was productive of lasting benefits to the souls and bodies of men.

"O ye Sunday-school teachers! who are so anxious to witness the fruits of your labours, endeavour so to regulate your proceedings as that the parents and others in the vicinity of your schools may be benefited by your labours. Let your branches run over the wall; so shall they gather ripe clusters from your vine, and that prayer, which has so frequently and fervently ascended from your lips and hearts, shall be abundantly answered:—'Let thy work *appear* unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.'" (Note XIV.)

§ 9. *The susceptibility of children to religious impressions.*

No one can overrate the importance of the early conversion of children to Christ. With rare exceptions, those who embrace the gospel late in life are of comparatively little service to the church. Like patients from the hospital, whose cases have been very obstinate and whose cure is certainly to the credit of the skill and fidelity of the attending physician, such late converts are wonderful monuments of the power and grace of the great Physician, but, as it regards active service for the church, they are little better than cripples. "Hospital Christians" they have been called,—who, though

saved themselves, accomplish little towards saving others. How different with a vigorous, earnest, energetic youth, who takes strong and fresh hold of the hope set before him in the gospel and devotes to his Creator and Redeemer the dew of his youth!

There is a prevalent impression, not readily acknowledged even to ourselves, that little children cannot, in the nature of things, be Christians. It seems to be thought that as the body must acquire a certain degree of strength and compactness before it can bear burdens or endure labour, and the judgment must attain to a certain degree of maturity before its determinations are reliable, so the convictions of the mind and the emotions of the heart are of little account until the age of infancy and childhood is passed, and the individual is capable of apprehending the objects and grounds of religious faith. (Note XV.) There can be no doubt that children, very little children, have strong passions. Their likes and dislikes may be very capricious, but they are very decided. They love very warmly, they trust very implicitly, they yield (when their will is opposed) very reluctantly. There would seem to be some foundation here for what is called religious feeling; and, as a matter of fact, children do very decidedly evince such a feeling at a very tender age.

So deep are the very earliest of these impressions, oftentimes, that no change of time or place obliterates or obscures them. Indeed, Dr. Chalmers, when sixty years of age, said that the Scripture prints with which he was familiar in his childhood were still so vividly before his mind as to impart a peculiar tinge and charm to the same subjects as they were presented

to his vision in his minute and critical examination of them.

Our readers are familiar with anecdotes in confirmation of this statement, some of which, we presume, seem quite incredible. We shall select but a few, and all of indubitable authority.

The life of that remarkable young man, *Francis Lewis Mackenzie*, son of Lord Mackenzie, of the Supreme Court of Scotland, furnishes interesting evidences of a child's susceptibility to religious impressions, which are the more valuable from the fact that they matured into the principles of a most distinguished and exemplary Christian life, though terminated at the early age of twenty-one. When he was four years of age, his mother entered the room where he was alone at his play, and said, "Why, Frankie, nobody here but you?" "Yes, mamma, God is here." The maturest Christian can ask no higher incentive to holiness than that he is constantly under the inspection of a holy God. At six years of age he overheard a conversation between a missionary from China and some ministers. Upon going to bed that night, he said to his mother, "Mamma, if you think it right, I would like to pray myself," (meaning to dispense on that occasion with his accustomed form.) Permission being given, he used the following words, which were written down a few moments after they were uttered. "O Lord, they are wanting to tell the people about Jesus. Do thou make a great many people go to hear them, that they may know about Jesus and be made good; and when they are trying hard to do thy work, Satan will be trying to hinder them and do them harm. Do thou keep them, and not

let Satan touch them at all." It would be difficult for the most thoughtful and experienced Christian to describe in the same number of words more of the nature, the importance, the difficulties and the encouragements of the work of missions, or of the true ground of faith in its ultimate accomplishment. It might serve well as a form of prayer for the Missionary Monthly Concert. Can we suppose such a child to be incapable of the enjoyment of Christian faith and hope?

Not less abundant and satisfactory is the evidence that very young children have an accurate discernment of truth and duty. It is admitted that in most instances there has been faithful early instruction, and the associations of the child from infancy have been with religious people and usages; but this does not detract from their pertinency or value as showing that the infant mind is capable of receiving and appreciating religious truth. Especially quick and acute is it in applying principles and detecting inconsistencies. The life of young Mackenzie, before cited, furnishes an illustration. A passage (Exodus xxvii. 20) being read, in which particular directions are given about the oil of the sanctuary, and some comments being made upon it, the child, then five years old, soon after showed his understanding of the typical meaning of the passage by applying it in one of his prayers:—"O my God! make me to burn this day with pure oil."

At six years of age, he was reading to his mother, when this sentence occurred. "In vain will ye seek him (Jesus) in unholy pursuits and sinful pleasures." He stopped, thought a moment, and then said, "I am sure if we '*seek*' Jesus *anywhere* we shall find him." The

mistake was the author's, who should not have spoken of *seeking* Jesus where he is not to be found.

It is to be feared that the manner of many teachers tends to confirm an impression upon which the prince of darkness relies much for the security of his prey, viz., that children are not expected to be religious till they are older. No specific time is fixed, but there is a certain period within which they are under tutors and governors and are supposed to have no particular position and, of course, no particular responsibility. When the proper time comes to consider their religious obligations, attention is to be called to them, and the preparatory work of learning Scripture, and hymns, and catechisms, and cultivating religious habits, is with a view to secure the desired result when the appropriate time comes. Of course, any unusual interest a child manifests in religious truth or duty *before the time* is regarded with apprehension, as indicating that the little creature's days on earth are soon to end. After a course of preliminary instruction in the simple elements of religion, there is generally a season of exhortation and warning, at the close of which (unless they sooner leave the school) a decided stand on the side of truth and holiness is confidently expected. Now, so far as the idea of such a mechanical process influences the teacher's feelings or manner, or leads the pupil to think that an early choice of Christ as his portion and hope is not expected, it is greatly to be deprecated. If we interpret the revealed will of God rightly, it is that every human soul that is conscious of guilt and seeks pardon, of pollution and seeks to be cleansed, of danger and seeks a refuge, shall not fail to find them all, and

that not to-morrow or next week, at any other future time, but NOW. Full and complete salvation is provided. There is no condition or contingency in the case. From every one who accepts the gospel the condemnation of the law is removed. It may be natural, but very unscriptural, to suppose some analogy exists between the divine and human governments in this respect. It is not so. To secure the favour of the government towards a condemned offender, the individual case is made the subject of a distinct appeal and investigation, and some good cause must be shown for the intervention of the supreme power to arrest the due operation of law, —such as the discovery of new evidence or the apparent mortal sickness of the guilty party. But the scheme of human redemption rests on no such grounds. It offers a present perfect salvation to each child in our classes as much as to us. If the youngest of them feels the guilt and burden of sin (as the youngest may) and desires relief, he need not go home, or to church, or to a Christian friend, to obtain it. The faintest whisper of love, the feeblest effort of faith, is accepted by Him who waits to be gracious; and such emotions are, to say the least, as likely to be felt on the Lord's day, when the word of salvation is affectionately and earnestly inculcated with a deep sense of dependence upon divine aid, and where every influence is or should be favourable to the germination and growth of religious feeling, as at any other time or place. (Note XVI.)

Our children, it is said by one and another, are heedless and inattentive, even while we point out their guilt and danger and urge them to flee from the wrath to come. So were we once, when in the like circum-

stances. We did not believe there was any cause for alarm or any need of immediate exertion. No human art or power can break this spell. The strong man armed keepeth his palace till a stronger than he comes and dispossesses him. What we have to do is to set before the pupil's mind in the most impressive and intelligible manner the perfect holiness of the divine law, the inexcusableness of every transgression, the nature of the penalty, the way of pardon and salvation, and the infinite and boundless grace which is displayed in offering it to guilty rebels. These are the grave realities with which we are concerned as religious teachers of the young; and it is well for us if we so esteem them ourselves as to prompt us to earnestness and sympathy when presenting them to others, and especially to young and inconstant minds.

If a portion of the time which is spent by many teachers in exhorting and warning scholars and in arousing their fears were given to a contemplation of the abounding mercy of God in the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, and the *necessary* connection as well between sin and suffering as between holiness and happiness, it might be oftener found that the minds of little children are not incapable of religious emotions as strong and permanent as any other. There must be a warm and tender sympathy mingled with our instructions of children. Their confidence must be won and carefully cherished; and all this is part of the study and labour of the wise teachers who hope to bring many to righteousness. When our divine Teacher was upon the earth, and young children were brought to him, he did not set them on the benches with the doctors, with their

little feet dangling a foot from the floor, and say to them, "Now, children, I want you to be very still and very attentive, and listen to what I say;" but he took them into his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them; and they, doubtless, expressed their love for him in some becoming way. We cannot bring our children to him in his human form; but surely he is not less accessible since he is exalted for the very purpose of giving repentance and remission of sins to them not less than to us. And when we present them to him in faith, though he may not put his hands upon them and bless them, he may shed upon them the gentle dew of his grace and draw their tender hearts into blessed and indissoluble union with himself. But the nearness and fulness of his divine blessing may be closely connected with the faith, diligence and prayer with which our part of the work is done. Never will the natural affections of our children be stronger towards what is pure and good than they are now; and never will they be more pliable. A little boy was listening attentively to a sermon in which the sympathies of the maternal and filial relations were brought strongly to view. Among other incidents of the Scripture narrative which were dwelt upon, was the miraculous restoration of the only son of the widow of Nain, and especially the expression of the historian, "And he delivered him to his mother;" and also our Saviour's exclamation to John, "Behold thy mother!" The child's affections were so kindled by the allusions that he forgot for the moment the proprieties of the place, and, slipping down from his seat and climbing upon his mother's knee, he imprinted an audible and hearty kiss upon her cheek! Why are we so slow to

avail ourselves of the powerful emotions of which a little heart is so susceptible?

The chief point we have in view in this connection, however, is to persuade teachers to regard the *present salvation* of their pupils as an event to be earnestly desired and confidently expected as a result of their faithfulness and in answer to their prayers. Their whole manner, and the drift of their teaching, should combine to make the impression that a failure to introduce them into the family of Christ *while they are children* would be a severe disappointment.

Too often, alas, our children leave the school, at the close of the session, without any evidence that their impenitence is any cause of anxiety to us, or that their acceptance of offered mercy will not be just as seasonable a week or a year hence as now. No wonder that, with a natural bias so strong towards things seen and temporal, they should concur in the apparent conclusion of their Sunday-school teacher and guide "that, to-morrow will be as this day" in respect to opportunities and means of grace, "and much more abundant." And so, things unseen and eternal are dismissed from the mind.

It will not be inferred from any thing we have said in this connection that it is a cause of despondency or discouragement that the fruits of our labour do not at once appear, or that an answer to our prayers is not at once vouchsafed.

> "Though seed which is sown may not seem to take root,
> Yet still we're encouraged to look for the fruit:
> As husbandmen do, when they cast in the grain,
> We wait, and we know it shall not be in vain."

We may not find a more suitable connection in which to admonish teachers not only to avoid the appearance of indifference to what a child may say, but to afford them frequent and favourable opportunities to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Some teachers are always in a hurry. Perhaps they are at their posts in season, but, either from want of method in their work, or from attempting too much, or from mere thoughtlessness, they are startled by the sound of the dismissal-bell, and in much haste and confusion close up their class-duties. When visits are paid, they are so brief as scarcely to afford opportunity for conversation; and, if a casual meeting occurs in the street, it is evident that the teacher has something else to do besides "stopping to talk." "I was lately called," says one, "to visit the dying bed of a young woman, who for a considerable time I had seen regularly once a week, but whom I considered one of the unpromising ones to whom it was of no use to try to do any good. After several ineffectual attempts to draw out her thoughts on eternal things, my visits when I found her alone had been made as short as possible, and I hastened away to others whom I thought more open to impression. Great, therefore, was my astonishment when I heard her express the most simple trust and confidence in that Saviour through whose precious blood-shedding the sting of death had been for her entirely taken away. I found she had been long under most deep and distressing conviction of sin, and had passed through a severe mental conflict, which had been concealed from every eye but that of the Omniscient. At length, however, she was able to lay down her burden at the foot

of the cross and to go on her way rejoicing. And now, in the valley of the shadow of death she fears no evil, for the rod and staff of a present Saviour support and comfort her. After satisfying myself that there was no reason to fear self-deception, I expressed to her my joy at hearing the expression of her hope, and my surprise that I had not been aware of the state of her mind. She fixed her eyes intently upon me and said, very slowly, 'Oh, Miss ——, how often have I wished to open my mind fully to you! but I could not do it before others, and when I was alone *you always seemed to be in such a hurry!*' I knew she was far from intending to reproach me; but bitterly did I regret my haste and negligence, which, but for God's abundant mercy, might have led to the stifling of her serious impressions and the ruin of her soul."

§ 10. *Training-Classes.*

A very cursory survey of the ground we have passed over must satisfy any reflecting mind that the office of a Sunday-school teacher cannot be safely accepted or declined without grave consideration. It may be difficult to define precisely what age, what intellectual endowments or attainments, and what moral or religious qualifications, should be insisted on in a candidate for so responsible a position; but we hazard nothing in saying that the office should be conferred on no one without serious reference to fitness in these several particulars. It will require but a brief experience of the duties and difficulties of such a vocation to satisfy a thoughtful mind that something more than human skill and strength is needed to cope with them; and if there is not a felt ne-

cessity for divine aid as well as for all the help which can be derived from the sympathy and co-operation of fellow-labourers, it may be feared that the obligations and responsibilities of the place are but imperfectly apprehended. While it is admitted that "the true power of a teacher lies in the force of his own character, the depth of his convictions, and the consistency of his life," it is nevertheless and equally true that great additional power may be acquired by study, observation and experience.

Various plans have been devised to supply teachers with the means of improvement. Weekly meetings for prayer and for the study of the lesson, when properly conducted, and monthly meetings at which the general interests of the school are discussed in connection with devotional exercises, have a tendency to improve the minds as well as the hearts of teachers; but there needs to be a distinct and direct agency for giving them a proper knowledge of the *art of teaching*.

A very little reflection must satisfy us that the art is not to be acquired without much pains-taking; and though the subject-matter of Sunday-school instruction is what God has revealed, and not what our philosophy or investigation may have brought to light, there are various modes of presenting even revealed truth to the minds of others; and much of the success of our teaching depends upon the choice we make. So that, whatever may be the attainments of any individual teacher in this difficult art, it is scarcely to be supposed that a comparison of his experience and observation with that of others would not supply some items of valuable information not before possessed.

To diffuse and, as far as possible, equalize the common stock of knowledge, resort has been had to what are called "training-classes."

The design of these classes is—

"1st. To impress the teacher with the importance of his work, by showing him in what *good* teaching consists. Many, no doubt, have a solemn conviction that their work is second to none, except it be the adult ministry: the majority, however, it is to be feared, think but little about its great responsibility. *They* become teachers, and remain so, supposing they have little more to do than to give their scholars elementary instruction,—to hear them recite their hymns or catechisms,—to read a chapter or two with them, and now and then to make a few crude and didactic remarks thereon. The model-lessons in the training-class, and the practice-lessons, not only show them how a real model class is conducted by a model teacher, and how an ordinary class *should* be conducted by teachers of ordinary intelligence, but help to open their eyes to their own deficiencies,—one great step towards improvement. Who can doubt that if a young male or female teacher be thus open to conviction, if apt to learn as well as desirous of being apt to teach, he or she will soon recognise the importance of the office, its great responsibility and solemn duties?

"2dly. To prove that good and effective teaching is not confined to one plan or method. Many men, many ways. This is seen to perfection in the training-class; so that you are really puzzled to decide which is best. The judicious, careful teacher, anxious to adopt the best, will consider the excellencies of each in connection

with his own capacity or means, and will select that most likely to subserve his purpose. Our six months' course has convinced us, if we needed conviction, that good and effective teaching is not limited to one or two methods, any more than good and effective preaching is confined to one or two arrangements of sermons.

"3dly. To show that preparation is an essential element in all good teaching. This is so obvious, as the model or practice lesson proceeds, that the pupils have only to use their common sense to be satisfied that the conductor of the lesson for the evening must have made careful preparation, and that, if they themselves aim at good teaching, they must imitate his example in that particular.

"4thly. To show that good teaching is pleasant teaching. The pupil sees this in the order and attention of the children, though surrounded by a considerable number of spectators; while the earnestness, the cheerfulness, the animation and the absorption of the teacher in his work place the truthfulness of our inference beyond doubt or cavil."

The manner of proceeding (as we gather from various sources) is substantially thus:—A suitable place of meeting is provided and an invitation extended to teachers to assemble and form a class. They are to understand that the purpose of the organization is mutual improvement, and for this a *willingness to be taught* is a pre-requisite. It is desirable that the members should consider themselves enlisted for the course, and it is considered expedient by many that a small fee should be required to defray needful expenses, instead of the class being open and free to all. What

costs something is more likely to be valued, and a more regular attendance would be secured.

At one end of the apartment is a raised platform, to be occupied by the chairman or director of the class. On his right hand is a class of twelve or fourteen children, whose age and acquirements differ according to the use that is to be made of them, whether to illustrate infant-school, juvenile, or more advanced instruction. The teacher who is to conduct the class is seated in the midst of them; or the class may remain in an ante-room till it is wanted. The meeting being opened with singing and prayer, a brief lecture or discussion may ensue on some practical topic, say,—"The proper use of a question-book." Some general principles having been stated, the lecturer, or some person supposed to be quite competent to illustrate the proper method of using the book, takes the class and goes through a short lesson, in teaching which he is supposed to present his method to the teachers in attendance as a model. At this meeting, or at the next, the principles of the previous lecture are discussed; and now some teacher is called upon to take a class and go through with a lesson on the model principle previously illustrated. This is called a practice-lesson; and all the teachers present are to suggest, in a kind and candid spirit, any defects which they may observe in its progress. Thus a training-class is based (as it has been said) on a very plain principle. A father, at the dinner-table, sees his little son handling his knife or spoon awkwardly. He takes it from him and says, "Look here; see how I hold it." That is a "*model-lesson.*" Then he says, "Let me see you take it and do

in the same way." This is the "*practice-lesson.*" The preparation-class is to show teachers *what* to teach; the training-class is to show them *how* to teach. In the first they gain the knowledge; in the second they learn how to use it.

In the course of a series of conferences with Sunday-school teachers which it was our privilege to hold several years ago, we resorted to an experiment in combined "model and practice lesson." The specific object then in view was to show how the attention of an entire class could be secured while only one member was under direct instruction,—a difficulty of which many teachers sorely complain, and which fills many schools with intolerable noise and confusion. From that experiment we learned several lessons, such as—

1. That a class of children selected for such a purpose should have been previously accustomed to the teacher's manner, and the teacher to their habits, dispositions and capacities, so that when they come together for the experiment they should not be strangers to each other.

2. That the method employed in illustrating the principle or mode of teaching should be so simple and practical that teachers of ordinary capacity and skill may be able to adopt it. The teachers who are looking on should *see* and *feel* that they can do as the model teacher does with no more time, talents or opportunities than they now have, though perhaps with a better improvement of them all.

3. That the teachableness and ability of the pupils to comprehend what is taught shall be about the same as are found in the common run of Sunday-school children. There should be no room for a teacher to say, "It is

easy enough with *such* children; but I would like to have him try my class just once."

As a general thing, it is better that the teacher of the model or practice lesson should be no more nor less than a Sunday-school teacher from the working-ranks. It is not any part of the design of training-classes to afford "crack" teachers an opportunity to display their powers, (if they were so inclined,) but simply to show what almost any teacher may accomplish by proper pains.

How to deal with village schools so as to secure some agency to benefit teachers when scattered over rural districts is an important question. It is suggested that one way of meeting the difficulty would be for the various local associations to establish central classes in their several towns, and to make arrangements for friends to visit the village schools and give a model-lesson after the services of the Sabbath-day are over, having previously attended the schools, and noted the way in which they were conducted, so as to point out any defects which might strike their minds. It is believed that if there is one class of persons in the country who more truly demand the hearty sympathy and practical help of their brethren, it is the teachers of village schools, who toil on unnoticed, from year to year, struggling with difficulties which those in more favoured localities know nothing about.

How far any provision of this kind would be desirable, practicable or acceptable among us, we are not prepared to say. That it would be *useful* we are quite confident; and we may add that our Sunday-school work is well worth any wit or labour that can be ex-

pended in making it more efficient and complete in all its departments.

Whatever form the plan may take, it should be systematic; it should not demand an unreasonable portion of time; and there should be connected with it ample opportunity for asking questions and expressing a difference of views.

A sensible and practical writer says,—

"Two classes of qualifications are needful to constitute an accomplished and successful teacher. First, an interest in the subject taught, a love for the work, and an earnest desire to promote the highest interest of the learners. 2. Mental vigour and flexibility; insight into character; knowledge of methods, the ability to adapt them to new circumstances, and the nameless resources that go to make up tact, skill and teaching-power. The former are the moral qualities that make the *animus* or force of the instrument; the latter, the intellectual and mechanical gifts by which the moral force is applied and made to produce the desired results." The extent to which those qualities are combined in the living, active teachers of to-day is the measure of the true efficiency of our Sunday-school machinery. The army is *numerically* large enough to defeat any opposition, and there is enthusiasm enough to lead a forlorn hope; but, undrilled, undisciplined, and unskilled in the evolutions and weapons of the service, it is but a blind giant expending his strength in aimless and objectless thrusts.

The two classes of qualifications to which we have referred are intimately related. Nothing can compensate for the absence of the former; and yet these

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The two classes of qualifications to which we have referred are intimately related. Nothing can compensate for the absence of the former; and yet these

are comparatively inefficient if the latter are wanting. The British Sunday-schools are differently constituted from the schools in the United States, and the same deficiencies would be felt much less in one country than in the other. A large number of the children that attend our Sunday-schools enjoy the most liberal advantages of secular education. They are accustomed to the proprieties of life and to the company and conversation of refined and intellectual people. The religious instruction given in the Sunday-school which is to profit pupils of this class would be of a different grade from that required in a school composed chiefly of the children in a mining or manufacturing village.

So in the matter of discipline. One cannot spend five minutes in a British Sunday-school without perceiving the presence of a spirit of obedience and subordination to authority, which rarely shows itself in any of our schools. There is that in the political systems of the two countries which perceptibly affects every class, condition and age of the people. In one there is an instinctive respect for constituted authority, a recognition of superior rank and social position, and an appreciation of favours bestowed. In the other there is a spirit of independence which ill brooks any degree of restraint, contemns social distinctions, and spends its breath in clamouring for *rights* rather than in acknowledging *favours*. We are not concerned with the comparative desirableness of these different states of society, but with the modifications which they render necessary in the management of Sunday-schools: and what we affirm is that rules of

discipline which would work very well in a transatlantic would be quite out of place in a cisatlantic Sunday-school. What has been affirmed of the grade of instruction and the mode of discipline, will, of course, apply equally to the qualifications of teachers. The conclusion to which this comparison brings us is, that, whatever measures are regarded as necessary to qualify the teacher of a British Sunday-school for his duties, no less will by any means answer for us, while the peculiarities of our institutions and habits require much with which they can dispense.

It is worthy of notice, that those who are expected to compose what are called "preparation-classes" are supposed to possess beforehand what are regarded as "*preliminary qualifications*,"—piety, love of teaching, solicitude for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and especially a desire for the conversion of children. And as in training-classes the members are expected to have already obtained a proper knowledge of the subject-matter of the lesson, to supply them with it, irrespective of their own labour, would only be to enfeeble them. The office of a training-class is not to relieve teachers of the task of informing themselves, but to show them how to use, to the best advantage, the store which has been laid up. If we should scrutinize the present position of the great body of Sunday-school teachers in the United States, it would probably be found that one, and perhaps the chief, cause of the languor and inefficiency of our schools is the lack of available religious knowledge, rather than of ability or skill to use it. The reverse of this is said to be the condition of the teachers of British Sunday-schools.

It is obvious, therefore, that our respective methods of reaching and remedying acknowledged defects should not be alike. It is to be regretted that the plans which are devised for the improvement and invigoration of our Sunday-school system, and especially for the help of teachers, should so often fail to be useful to such as most need help. Those who are forward to avail themselves of a course of lectures, or a weekly meeting to study the lesson, or a training-class, or a seasonable volume explanatory of their duties, are generally well posted up already in Sunday-school literature and exemplary in the discharge of their official functions; while such as have few advantages, and are most deficient in the knowledge of their duties, are among the missing. An old teacher, who has seen hard service for one or two generations, will push his way through cold and storm to be present at a lecture or preparation-meeting, while the self-reliant but inexperienced, who need just such aid as these occasions supply, betake themselves to a literary society or a debating-club, or indulge in social pleasure. Perhaps a little more sympathy and friendly intercourse between veterans and recruits would prove of service to both. (Note XVII.)

CHAPTER IV.

INSTRUCTON,—CONTINUED.

Two appendages are necessary to a thriving Sunday-school. One is a well-managed infant class or classes, to serve as feeders to the main body of the school; and the other, one or more well-taught Bible-classes, to receive those who have outgrown, or seem to themselves to have outgrown, the advantages of the main school, and to supply them with a higher grade of instruction. We will briefly treat of the character, design and advantages of each.

§ 1. *Infant Sunday-schools or classes.*

The system of *infant-schools* was once quite in favour in this country. It has never, however, been so thoroughly introduced, nor so ingeniously and liberally sustained, here as in England. It would not be difficult to assign very plausible reasons for the disuse into which the system fell after an experiment of a few years, but it would not be relevant to our present purpose. There is nothing peculiar in the idea of bringing a score or two of little children into one room and giving them instruction suited to their circumstances. It is only doing to that collected number what any intelligent parent or elder brother or sister is accustomed to do at home. Some persons maintain that little children should not be taught at all, but be left entirely free, to "pick up" little fragments of know-

lodge as they do pins or straws,—just because they lie in their way. Some will not even allow their children to learn to read before they are seven or eight years old, fearing the temptation to a premature employment of their intellectual faculties. The system of infant-schools does not necessarily involve instruction in reading, nor, indeed, any thing more than the supply of such aids to mental developement as a child naturally craves.

Inquisitiveness is natural to children; and before they are capable of articulating a word their countenances and motions exhibit unequivocal tokens of it. They are also susceptible of very strong emotions of fear and love, of distrust and confidence, of aversion and attraction, of satisfaction and discontent. Those who are accustomed to observe the dispositions of very little children often detect the indications of anger, jealousy, selfishness, vanity, &c. at a very early age. It is in vain to say that the influence of evil example is adequate to produce these phenomena. They are manifest in children before they are old enough to distinguish such traits in those around them. If a desired object is withheld even for kind and wise purposes, they may suppose it is from the same selfish nature which induces them to withhold what a sister or mother wants; but surely it will not be pretended that the kind and wise act of the parent or nurse gives *existence* to the hateful principle of selfishness, —that, if such a misconstrued act had not been done, the selfish temper would not have been betrayed! It is one of those principles which belong to our depraved moral nature just as truly as the natural emotions of

fear and love. We do not underrate the power of evil example. The child's nature yields readily to the influences that surround it. A naturally ingenuous and amiable temper may be spoiled by continual contact with a fretful, irritable, impatient spirit. But these influences, good or bad, merely serve to draw out principles already in existence. The virtue or vice of each individual which forms the first line of moral character is the outward manifestation of the activity of a corresponding principle within. Nor can any human wit or power of itself uproot the principle of vice or implant that of virtue. Nevertheless, it is an axiomatic truth that the principle of virtue, when once implanted by divine grace, is capable of culture, and is nourished and strengthened by the circumstances which surround it, while the natural indigenous principle of vice is rooted and invigorated by vicious example and association.

"When I have seen even an infant-school bursting from its confinement, and joyously pouring into the street, it has occurred to me," says the late Judge Hopkinson,* "that all the power, the knowledge, the ambition, the grandeur and business of the world will soon depend on such as these."

The injudicious or unskilful treatment of the little living forms which enclose the priceless jewel of immortality, is not more certain to show itself in the after-growth than is the neglect to lead out and gently guide the infant faculties and passions of the soul. It is in vain to suppose that if we do nothing they will have

* Oration before the Zelosophic Society of the University of Pennsylvania, January 27, 1831.

a healthy, gradual developement. A child has scarcely opened its eyes upon this beautiful world before adverse influences beset it on every side, within and without. The unseen powers of light and darkness stand in close proximity; and before he is conscious of their presence, perhaps, he is in their custody.

We look upon this first stage in the life of the little stranger with the deepest interest,—we might almost say profound reverence. As its capacities and susceptibilities expand and its sympathies become active, incidents that scarcely excite the notice of others make a deep impression on its infant nature. "Every day adds another page to the book of memory, which in after-life will be read with pleasure or pain; and as leaf after leaf of this interesting volume is turned, he should find no harsh words, no unjust accusations of unkind treatment, stereotyped there, but, instead, gentle words, kindness of manner without harshness, and the miniature of features glowing with love and sympathy: in a word, pleasant scenes should meet the retrospective eye as it rests upon the pages of infancy and childhood. Many a little child has moments when its heart swells almost to bursting with some real sorrow; and at such times how often is its sensitive nature wounded by harsh words or unkind treatment!"

"The very handling of the nursery is significant," says a popular American author; "and the petulance, the passion, the gentleness, the tranquillity, indicated by it, are all reproduced in the child. His soul is a purely receptive nature, and that, for a considerable period, without choice or selection. A little further on, he begins voluntarily to copy every thing he sees. Voice,

manner, gait, every thing which the eye sees, the mimic instinct delights to act over. And thus we have a whole generation of future men receiving from us their very beginnings and the deepest impulses of their life and immortality. They watch us every moment, in the family, before the hearth, and at the table; and when we are meaning them no good or evil, when we are conscious of exerting no influence over them, they are drawing from us impressions and moulds of habit which, if wrong, no heavenly discipline can wholly remove, or, if right, no bad associations utterly dissipate. Now, it may be doubted, I think, whether, in all the active influence of our lives, we do as much to shape the destiny of our fellow-men as we do in this single article of unconscious influence over children."

And it should never be forgotten that this influence is exerted in an endless variety of ways. It is not our positive acts only—what is done, or said, or sung, but the objects which are presented to them, often make the most false and mischievous impressions. Why should the first line which we draw on the tablet of the infant understanding be the most awkward and incongruous that the wit of men can devise? Why should the doll be so shaped as to suggest every idea but those of grace and proportion? Why should the walls of the little inner chambers in their souls be hung around with the most grotesque and horrible images in the shape of pictures, unless it is to furnish matter for frightful dreams, or to people the darkness with elves and ogres?

It cannot be doubted that the impressions made upon infancy and early childhood, not only by false

representations of objects of sense, but by fictitious exhibitions of virtue and goodness, conduce in a large degree to that questioning, skeptical disposition of which we hear so much complaint. The natural aversion of the heart to truth is sufficiently strong to dispense with any extraneous aid.

The infant Sunday-school is designed to do for very young children what the Sunday-school proper professes to do for their older brothers and sisters,—acquaint them with the elementary truths of religion, and so prepare them for the successive stages of life. We see children of four or five years of age disobedient, and even insolent, to their parents. They are told not to go into the street or to the brook. They are impatient of such restraint, and soon make their way into the forbidden territory. The offence excites anger, and anger vents itself in harsh words and hasty blows. This does not beget love or subordination, but fear or some malignant passion. Every repetition of the offence is followed by similar retribution, and produces any thing but filial reverence. Is there no way in which the parents' authority could have been upheld when it was first exercised? Might it not have been enforced with a firmness and gentleness that should have excited no such opposition? There was a time when no human influence was powerful enough to turn the tide of that boy's affections from that woman—his mother. When was the deed done, or what was the word, that alienated his young heart and made him regard her with such aversion and dread? It was a thoughtless deed and a heedless word; and to a child who had been instructed in the rudiments of filial duty it might have given only

momentary disturbance. But natural affection, which in many grades of society is scarcely more than animal instinct, is not strong enough to bear many such onsets; and when this first barrier to the indulgence of a child's own impetuous will is broken down, it is difficult to erect another of sufficient strength to withstand it.

A Sunday infant-school, then, proposes to do, as far as practicable, what a judicious mother would be likely to do in the way of religiously instructing her little children. Her aim would be to guide their infantile thoughts from an earthly to a heavenly Father, and to aid their feeble conceptions of things unseen by such simple means as are fitted to their capacity. Lessons of truth and duty illustrated and enforced by methods which experience and observation suggest would thus be inculcated, and would serve as a foundation for future instruction of a higher grade. Children six, eight and even ten years old often enter our Sunday-schools, and are placed in classes of like station and age, who are as ignorant of the merest rudiments of Scripture knowledge as if they had never seen a Bible or heard of one. Unless the class is composed of children who are equally deficient, time and pains are needful to bring this stranger into a position to profit by the instruction. The preparatory service of an infant-school provides against these inequalities, and so far as it is skilfully and efficiently performed the Sunday-school is a large gainer.

The value of a good class or school of this description at the outset is felt through the whole range of instruction. The child that comes into the main school from the infant-room is well fitted to be an orderly and

attentive pupil, and thus relieves the teacher of what are oftentimes the most perplexing and patience-trying duties of the office. One heedless, untoward pupil will hang like a dead weight on a class. When the work, successfully begun in the infant-department, has been skilfully followed up in the principal school, the doors of the Bible-class room are opened, and the now somewhat mature pupil enters upon a more advanced course of study and in due time becomes qualified to engage in teaching others. The thread of gossamer that encircled the little child in the infant-school, increased into a firm cord in the Sunday-school, becomes a strong cable under an intelligent Bible-class teacher. And so intimate is the relation of each of these successive stages one to the other, that, like a chain, a defect in the first link impairs the strength and value of all that follow it. The infant-school teacher sows the seed; the Sunday-school, with God's blessing, nurtures and irrigates the plant, while the Bible-class teacher watches and aids its healthful developement into maturity for the Church militant and triumphant, which is the body of Christ,* to reap the harvest.

§ 2. *Methods of teaching in infant schools or classes.*

As we have already remarked, the infant school or class is designed not as a stimulus, but as a leading-string. It is not to excite, but to gratify; not to create, but to supply. The infant mouth is full of questions. What is this? Who is that? What is this for? How is that made? Where does this come from? Where

* Col. i. 24.

does that go to? Some one says that a man who had recently come from the moon would not be a more entertaining companion to the inhabitants of the earth, than any observing person of mature age may be to a little child. All the globe—with the exception of his own door-yard, or twenty rods of the street—is more unknown to him than the mountains and caverns of the moon are to us. To meet the cravings of innocent curiosity, to give healthful direction to the infant thoughts, to repress the incipient growth of evil passions, and at the same time instil into the mind, as gently and silently as the dew falls, the simplest lessons of divine wisdom,—these are the leading purposes of this preliminary department of the Sunday-school.

The inquiry is often made for a manual or guide to the right method of managing an infant-school. Several works of this character are extant. We apprehend, however, that, from the nature of the case, the methods of instructing such a school must be chiefly suggested by the daily and hourly exigencies which arise, and which the ingenuity of each individual teacher will be tasked to meet. Every thing mechanical is rather a hinderance than a help. The attention can be retained but for a moment or two at a time, and in that brief period provision must be made to arrest and retain it for another moment or two, and each flitting season must, if possible, be used to good purpose. The ease and depth with which impressions are made compensate in a great degree for the evanescence of the opportunity. In maturer years attention may be commanded for a much longer time, but there is not the confidence and impressibility of mind and heart which characterize infancy.

And we need not say that this characteristic of his pupils gives to the position of the infant-school teacher a fearful responsibility. We could fill pages with authentic anecdotes illustrating the depth and permanency of impressions made upon infant children.

The chief reliance for the matter of infant-school instruction must be on what is addressed to the *senses*. Very little can be placed on the pupil's powers of thought or reflection. The voice, the eye, the posture and motions of the teacher, together with objects that can be seen, heard, or handled, or pictures of them, constitute the chief instruments of success.

The science of infant-school teaching has been reduced to a much more perfect system in England than in the United States. The Home and Colonial Infant-School Society, established in 1836, has been not only the means of keeping the subject prominently before the public mind, but it has supplied successive corps of trained teachers* and encouraged the preparation of books and apparatus for their use. Several persons of taste and leisure have entered with much enthusiasm into the subject, and the fruits of their skill and liberality have not been unappreciated. To show what stress is laid upon the use of sensible objects, we may mention, among the apparatus to which we have referred, an object-box, fifteen inches long, nine wide, and eight high, containing several trays, each divided into little compartments, like a druggist's drawer of labels. Each compartment holds a specimen of some article or

* Not less than seven hundred were thus prepared during the first six years of the Society's operations.

fragment of an article familiar to children,—a bit of charcoal, of chalk, of glue, of tin, of rosin, of glass, of earthenware, of twine, of wire, of beeswax, of bone, of leather, of cloth, &c. They are so arranged that one class of objects—say those which belong to what we wear—occupy one tray, and things used in building another, &c. &c. To those who have never reflected on the subject, such an auxiliary to infant-instruction might appear to be of little value. But fifteen minutes spent in the attempt to attract or hold the attention of fifty or sixty infant children would soon make its necessity apparent. We are not disposed to speak lightly of a suggestion some one makes, that in explaining to an infant-school the figure, used by John the Baptist, of the separation of the wheat from the chaff, it would be well to put upon the table a handful of unwinnowed grain, and with a common fan separate the chaff from the wheat, and put up the wheat carefully in some secure place, while the chaff is burned up before their eyes. We might perhaps demur a little to another suggestion made on high authority, viz., that in explaining Matthew xviii. 28 the teacher should actually take some one by the throat. To make the illustration effective might excite feelings which it is one office of the infant-school to keep in subjection.

As a general rule, the use of a book, or the reading of any thing from a book or paper, unless it is very brief indeed, is injudicious. Whether it is the monotony of the sound, or the diversion of the teacher's eye from the school to the page, or the unconscious thought that it is not the teacher, but an unseen

stranger, that is addressing them, it may not be easy to say, but the effect is almost uniformly unhappy. Much use is wisely made of singing. If the meaning of the words sung is understood (as it always should be before singing them) and the tune has real music in it, the association will rarely be lost during a lifetime. Most children love to sing and to hear singing; and hence we need to be on our guard lest we should give it an undue share of attention. The practice of setting a class or school to singing when visitors are present, is very likely to leave on the infant mind an impression not unlike that of a skilful performer leaving the stage amidst "a tempest of applause." It will not be thought over-scrupulous, we hope, to suggest that in the words and music used in an infant Sunday-school less license should be allowed than in the daily infant-school. While we make all their associations with the "day of sacred rest" pre-eminently happy and cheerful, we may secure for it, in the early habits of childhood, a reverence which in later life may be an invaluable safeguard.

Pictures are among the most important aids an infant-school teacher can employ; and yet, as we intimated in another connection, they require to be used with great judgment. A false statement is not more certain to mislead a child than a false picture. If we tell him that Moses wore a hat and trousers and boots, we do not deceive him any more than if we show him a picture of Moses in such apparel. If our picture represents the Prodigal Son before his aged father as a truant school-boy trembling under an impending blow from the tyrant master, we must not wonder if the parable, as our Saviour uttered it, is quite unintelligible to them.

We are not sure that the use of false pictures can be justified on the plea that the teacher can get nothing better. We certainly do not allow it to have weight when used in justification of other false statements or impressions. Most of us can call to mind instances in which the recollection of the picture of some Scripture scene or person controls any conception of it which we may attempt to form in after-life.

Nothing that the sacred historian has recorded, or the immortal bard sung, of the progenitors of our race, will materially affect the impression which thousands have derived from pictures which represent them as a couple of miserable, skulking vagrants. Few representations of the person or features of our Saviour have any tendency to elevate or aid our conceptions of them. Happy for us if they do not produce the opposite effect!

In like manner, care should be taken that only exact portraits of animals are presented to little children, and, as far as possible, that some idea be given of proportion. To put into their hands the picture of a kitten and one of an elephant occupying the same space, cannot fail to mislead them. It would be better to keep the elephant in reserve, or wait for a picture that should represent in some degree his proportion to familiar creatures.

It is a mistake of some teachers to retain boys who have passed a suitable age for infant-school teaching. One or two such pupils can easily disturb a class and distract a teacher. The success of such a school or class depends very much upon a general congruity of age, capacity and disposition. This is much more

easily attained with fifty or sixty children at the age of five or six, than even in a single class of six or eight three or four years older; and we may add that the presence of a perverse or stubborn child in the former is far more mischievous than in the latter. It is the practice in most infant-schools, Sunday and daily, to accustom children to repeat texts, hymns, &c. in concert. There may be advantages in this method which abundantly compensate for any supposed evils. Perhaps there is a little of the element of mutual instruction in it; and the sing-song tone in which the recitations are often made may be agreeable to the ear and relieve the exercise of a task-book. But the evils are not trivial. It is often found that children who repeat the sound very glibly cannot repeat the words,—much less do they attach any idea to them. And the accent, emphasis and cadence are all so completely sacrificed to the sing-song tone that they scarcely recognise the same words when used in reading or conversation.

We maintain that all the ideas little children are capable of receiving can be expressed intelligibly to them in good plain English words, and, whether in the infant-school or the nursery, all coined epithets or baby phraseology supposed to be specially fitted to infant ears, or adapted to infant capacities, are quite unnecessary, if not positively injurious. We would never knowingly suffer a child to use a word which it does not understand, nor repeat a sentence without some general notion of its meaning. Perfect accuracy in repetition, and some just idea of the meaning of what is repeated, are points upon which we should insist with great uniformity and pertinacity.

§ 3. *The Bible-class.*

It is not easy to fix any definite limit at which the Sunday-school work stops and the Bible-class work begins. Some are found at the age of sixteen, or even eighteen, to whom the arrangements and teaching of the Sunday-school are much better adapted than the exercises of a Bible-class; while others, again, outgrow the ordinary grade of Sunday-school teaching at thirteen or fourteen. As the infant-school department on one side of the main room is supposed to adapt the preparatory work to the ages and capacities of little children, so the Bible-class on the other side is supposed to adapt the supplementary work to the variety of ages and capacities of those that may have passed through the school;—the chief object in view being to detain them under a higher grade of instruction until they become settled and grounded in Scripture truth and prepared to be teachers of others. The Sunday-school is expected to retain the pupils under the ordinary routine of instruction so long as it is practicable, and, to this end, to employ teachers of mature years and competent skill for its older classes. It is when age, or station, or advanced attainments make a longer continuance in the main school embarrassing or comparatively unprofitable that a removal to a Bible-class becomes expedient.

We cannot too strongly urge the importance of this provision for those who leave the Sunday-school. It is believed that in a great majority of cases much of the advantage of years of precious instruction is sacrificed for want of the supplementary service of a good Bible-class. It cannot be doubted that large numbers of

youth of both sexes leave the Sunday-school without that measure of religious knowledge, or those religious habits, which a thoughtful teacher would wish them to possess. And it has been much to the reproach of the institution that so many who have been more or less under its influence fail to show themselves in places of public worship, and manifest great indifference to the claims of religion. It has been urged, in reply to such representations, that many, if not most, of those who prove thus recreant to their privileges were not *permanently* connected with it, but gave attendance a few weeks or months in one school, and then for a like term in another. This is undoubtedly true; but does it not suggest the inquiry whether if a proper degree of vigilance were exercised these itinerancies would not be in a great measure prevented?

After all allowance is made on the score of irregularity or brevity of attendance, the stubborn fact will remain that thousands of children and youth drop off annually from our Sunday-school registers, and are not seen again in the ranks of religious, God-fearing, church-going people. The complaint on this score has been much louder and deeper on the opposite side of the Atlantic than with us, and, though the evil may be somewhat exaggerated, it is admitted that there is enough of it to deserve grave attention.

Among the causes of the evil which have been suggested, are—1. The employment of persons as teachers who have no proper qualifications, or whose services are merely perfunctory. The pupils become weary and impatient of dry, listless, mechanical instruction. 2. The neglect of the great body of teachers to employ

the most obvious means of attaching the pupil to the school and making it the place of happy and genial associations. The custom of taking the scholars to a place of public worship, assigning them inconvenient and narrow accommodations, and obliging them to attend for an hour and a half or two hours at a service, which, however solemn and appropriate to adult worshippers, is unintelligible to them, often begets an aversion to the duty itself which not unfrequently remains through life.

The first two defects in the Sunday-school system prevail to a considerable extent in our country; but the third has very little influence. Our schools embrace children of all classes, a large majority of them belonging to families that attend a place of public worship, taking their children with them. Schools in our cities and large towns, which are composed chiefly of the children of the poor, are perhaps remiss in this particular. Their teachers may fear that an attempt to attach them to any particular church or congregation will be thought to savour of proselytism; but, whatever the cause, it is to be feared that a large proportion of such children fail to form church-going habits. If at the end of their school-course they are received into a well-taught Bible-class, there is an opportunity to establish such habits on a permanent foundation; so that we should regard the Bible-class as an invaluable and indispensable auxiliary to the school if it were only to conduct the pupils safely over that perilous stage in their journey which lies between the exit from the Sunday-school and the entrance upon the sober duties of life.

The indefiniteness of the boundary between the Sunday-school and the Bible-class, to which we have referred, may lead to abuses. We have known more than one Bible-class broken up by the admission to it of those for whom the school was the more appropriate place. When one of the older classes becomes tired of its teacher, or its teacher of it, and its dissolution seems near at hand, it is natural to propose a quiet passage out of the school into the Bible-class, without properly considering the consequences to both parties.* There may be a propriety in making some distinction between the advanced classes and the rest of the school, either by occupying different sections of the room, or by the intervention of a curtain or low partition; but the transfer of a pupil from the school to the Bible-class should not be made until it is quite obvious that the former is *not*, and that the latter *is*, his proper place.

The period of life for which the Bible-class department of a Sunday-school is most needed is just that at which the docility of childhood ceases and the age of sober thought begins,—perhaps from fourteen or sixteen to eighteen or twenty. It is at this period that dangers stand thickest and press hardest upon the young traveller in the path of life. He assumes a confident and independent bearing, that he may not seem to distrust himself,—as an intoxicated man tries to step firmly and resolutely, from a consciousness that his twisting limbs are betraying him.

* It is perfectly lawful to keep admission to the Bible-class before the minds of senior classes as an incentive and a reward, but not as a refuge from a dull or heartless teacher or for a disorderly or ill-mannered scholar.

The history of the dupes and victims who fill our penitentiaries shows that the first downward step in the path of crime is usually taken between the ages of fifteen and twenty, and usually not upon premeditation, but from sudden temptation in the absence of counteracting influences.

Errors of opinion; pernicious habits, personal, intellectual and moral; unhappy social relations, and an estrangement from wholesome domestic influences, are generally traceable to this critical period of life. Hence the importance of securing for it all the props and safeguards that the word and providence of God can supply; and the teacher who is called to take charge of a Bible-class needs to feel the full force of these considerations, and to weigh well the interests that are involved in the proper discharge of his duties.

The apartment in which such a class is held should be not only convenient and comfortable, but attractive. (Note XVIII.) No public room is too sacred or too well furnished to be so occupied. It should be supplied with a library of religious and secular books, to be judiciously used, under the advice of the teacher, as a means of instruction, information and recreation, and should be distinct in form and rules, as well as in contents, from the Sunday-school library. There should also be in sight or at command whatever apparatus may be needed for occasional reference or illustration.

A card of membership should be furnished, and only punctual and constant attendants should be retained on the register. It would be well to adopt a system of regular charitable contributions, the avails of which should be disposed of as a majority of the class direct.

The sessions of the class—which should rarely exceed one hour—may be appropriately commenced with singing, and the hymn to be sung should be previously assigned and committed to memory, and, as far as practicable, it would be well to have the hymn and a particular tune always associated. A short prayer may properly close the session.

How the teacher of such a class should be selected must, of course, depend on the circumstances of each case. Some advantages attend an election of a teacher by the class; but other modes of appointment may be open to fewer objections. The way by which he gets to the office is of very little consequence, however, if, when there, he is qualified to do the work. In determining who is worthy, we would avoid placing the standard of qualification so high that most Christian communities could not supply a fit incumbent. The general grade of intelligence and piety in each locality will govern opinion in such a matter, and our catalogue of virtues and graces must be modified accordingly.

"Sound in the faith, of course, he must be, if he is to do any good; a real, practical, loving, well-informed Christian, of gentle yet firm deportment, whose frankness, candour and urbanity may be obvious to all. He must have not only a general and comprehensive, but a particular, view of the contents of the Bible. He must have a competent knowledge of Scripture geography, and of the natural history of objects mentioned in the Bible. He should not neglect chronology, nor be ignorant of ancient history, so far as it is collateral to the Bible; and he should possess a power of analysis, such as will enable him to present doctrinal truths, in

their simplicity, with fitting clearness. He should have facility of utterance,—not wordy fluency, but such an unfettered ease of expression as shall prevent embarrassment in those who are listening to him. He should be able to expound a passage of Scripture,—as a watchmaker takes to pieces and puts together our watches,—though it be his main business to lead and train his pupils, so that they may become by degrees their own expositors.

"We must set a rather high standard for the qualifications of a Bible-class teacher; because if we only go on teaching our Bible-classes over and over again what they have learned as children in the school, it is probable they will drop off. If we attempt to create an appetite, we must be prepared to satisfy it. If we only profess to teach others what they already know as well as we do, they will soon discover that it is a waste of time to wait upon our teaching. Bible-classes must have the assurance that the teacher is *able* to lead them on, and that his well will not easily be pumped dry. Children soon find out when a teacher has run out his stock."

The chief end to be accomplished by the institution of such a class is the firm and intelligent establishment of its members in the principles of the Christian religion,—not in the dogmas or usages of a sect, but in those divine precepts and doctrines which form the only basis of moral virtue and integrity. Of course, the success of the effort must depend largely upon the degree of moral influence possessed by the teacher, and this, in like manner, depends on the measure of sympathy which subsists between them. A mere exhortation or explanation may serve a useful purpose; but the secret of all

moral influence is SYMPATHY. If such sympathy has been wanting in the previous connection of a pupil with the Sunday-school, the defect will be observed at once in his temper and deportment in the Bible-class. If it was engendered far back in the infant-school and fostered and expanded in the Sunday-school, its genial glow will fill the Bible-class teacher's heart with hope and joy.

§ 4. *Mode and subjects of Bible-class instruction.*

It should be the aim of a Bible-class teacher to excite his pupils rather than inform them. He will find not a little embarrassment, probably, from the habit so generally contracted of sitting indolently to hear what may be said, without any exertion of their own faculties,—not always that of attention. The first attempt to draw out what is thought or remembered by a class may be quite abortive; but the teacher is to feel his way to the least-informed mind in the group before him and set it at work. It may require a process which would be better suited to the infant-school; but it must be pursued if the alternative is the continuance of the mind in the same dormant condition. There is as little difficulty in distinguishing between natural timidity and mental inactivity as between modesty and laziness. The teacher must be the only reserved party. His voice should be heard as seldom as possible; and he may even allow occasional colloquies between members of the class, irregular as they may be, if thereby he can accustom them to the utterance of their thoughts.

"After some years' experience in guiding Bible-classes, (says one,) I have long ago come to the conclusion that

if we who are teachers aim at accomplishing our end by lecturing, and endeavouring, to the best of our ability, to expound to our pupils, we shall fail. We cannot be sure of the amount of attention that will be paid to our exposition; we cannot be sure of *any;* for it is possible that our minds may be the only ones actually stimulated to any effort. To accomplish the desired object, every mind in the class must be made to act, and to supply its quota in the work of exposition if the subject be doctrinal, or to the collecting of particulars and combining them if the subject be narrative, or to the viewing subjects in their various aspects and applications if they are preceptive. I would endeavour, at each lesson, to be adroit in summing up what may be brought out correctly by the class, and presenting to them, in a simple and connected form, the results of their united labour."

Nearly thirty years' service as a Bible-class teacher has satisfied us that the usefulness of such an organization depends very much on the freeness with which the members express their own thoughts. When we have succeeded in producing a lively discussion respecting some question of duty or the interpretation of some precept or doctrine of Scripture, something seemed to be accomplished. Good and lasting impressions may be made by a fervent and seasonable exhortation to duty; but if the minds of the class are not exercised, nor the power of introversion actively employed, it is little more than a mechanical process.

Suitable allowance will be made for the disadvantages of education or position. But any class can be trained to some measure of self-exertion; and a discerning

teacher will not be long at a loss for a method of excitement.

Inquiry is often made for the best system of instruction for a Bible-class. If marked success attends the efforts of some teacher, the community is astir to know the secret. Some newspaper paragraph, or a hint in some annual report, or a casual suggestion in a popular teachers' meeting, arrests attention; and forthwith a new experiment is tried, without any new result. The simple truth is that no prescribed plan of instruction will avail, of itself, to attract or retain a Bible-class. The teacher must have skill or spirit to gather hints from all sources, and adapt his instruments to his materials. A process that may do very well for a class of operatives of limited education would be quite inappropriate to the intelligent, thoughtful and well-read; and *vice versa*. There is an obvious propriety in observing some system in the Biblical studies of such a class, not only for the greater satisfaction which will be felt by both teachers and taught in the review, but also for the better understanding of the mutual connection and bearing of the different portions of the sacred volume. And this leads us to say that, whatever may be the method or matter, too much importance cannot be attached to the practice of making the Scriptures their own interpreter. The Bible-student is slow to appreciate the value of judicious references to parallel texts; nor will he learn it by a superficial or cursory examination of them. It would be a needless consumption of time, and withal a very dull task, to make this examination during the class-session. It should be done previously,

and the texts selected and read and any striking analogy or discrepancy noted for discussion. No other commentary can present such clear, safe and consistent expositions of the sacred text, inasmuch as no other commentary is inspired.

It is superfluous to say that the Bible is pre-eminently the Bible-class text-book. With its divine authority and elementary truths the pupils received from the Sunday-school are presumed to be familiar. But it may be useful and appropriate, as an introduction to a course of study, to examine the chief evidences on which its authority rests. Such an inquiry may be more needful at the present day, when its claims to implicit confidence are so often controverted, sometimes openly, but usually under the guise of general good will. Between the few who reject the Scriptures and the goodly number who receive them entirely and with hearty faith as a revelation from God, there is an uncounted multitude who have a sort of indefinite idea that they are of divine authority, or a positive belief that some portions of them are so, or a general inoperative conviction of their truth, as a whole, derived from education and association. When a sly thrust is aimed at the sacred volume in some newspaper paragraph, or in some unsuspected passage of a popular magazine, or in a humorous anecdote, they are not offended. A bold and vigorous assault upon some familiar truth may produce a slight shock; but their faith is not strong enough to resist, and they are "carried away with every wind of doctrine."

It is the opinion of many that sufficient attention is not given to the specific work of fortifying the minds

of the young against the specious cants of skeptics. Though many treatises on the subject are extant, adapted to various capacities, and setting forth the evidences of Christianity with a clearness and conclusiveness which no unprejudiced mind can resist, they are not read; while the flings and scoffs of free-thinkers are lurking through the pages of our popular magazines and in the columns of our most influential newspapers, and making their way into the minds of the young and heedless and preparing them insensibly for the boldest theories of skepticism. A reluctance to make this subject a prominent topic of Sunday-school instruction has been felt by many, because it requires the pupil to be informed of objections of which otherwise he might never hear. Whatever deference may be due to such views, they should not prevent us from instructing the young in the grounds of our faith. We can show them the reason of the hope that is in us, leaving them to learn from other sources (if it must be) what reasons can be given for rejecting it.

"I think," says a lecturer* before the Church of England Sunday-School Institute, "if I were now intrusted with the management of such a (Bible) class, I should commence by endeavouring, in a compendious manner, to set before them the leading evidences of the genuineness, authenticity and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures,—subjects which would never have occupied their attention while in the ordinary classes. I am persuaded the time is coming when our young disciples will need to be well instructed in these matters, that they

* Rev. George Fiske, Prebendary of Lichfield.

may be able to stand on the defensive against gainsayers.

"I would begin this department of instruction by illustrating the various modes in which matters of fact may be proved, and to show them what *evidence is*, when applied to matters of every-day interest. I would lead them clearly to distinguish between mere inferences and assumptions and positive proofs. And I would not enter upon the subject of Scripture evidences till I found they had acquired a correct notion of evidence in general. And, of course, the simplest and most familiar examples would be the best. When the pupils shall have learned the force and value of evidence in general, it will be an easy transition step by step to apply the principles of evidence to every part of the Bible. I have known some pious persons object, rather, to the study of evidences,—as if the Bible were to be received on its own credit alone, and as if there were danger of our faith becoming too rationalizing if the mind were much engaged in the sifting of evidences. But we are to remember that we cannot believe sincerely what we do not know truly; and in this view of the matter it does not appear quite enough for us to receive the Bible as an inspired revelation from God *just* and *only* because others have told us that it is so. We might have believed the Koran on the same grounds; and we probably should, had we been born and brought up within the bounds of the Ottoman empire.

"Do not imagine that I would spend too much time on this subject in commencing a Bible-class, or go as extensively into the subject as it admits of, but judi-

ciously select so much as would not only fairly establish the truth of the matter, but enable the pupils to resist the aggressions of infidelity, which sooner or later they must encounter." (Note XIX.)

It has been our custom at the opening of a new Bible-class, or at the commencement of a season with some new members, to make general inquiries with a view to ascertain what notions were entertained of the divine text-book. Such as, how we came by any ancient book; how we came by a book called "Irving's Life of Washington," or "Paradise Lost," or "Cicero's Orations." After ascertaining in a general way the origin of the volume, then inquire into some peculiarities of its composition; such as, over how long a space of time the events extended which it records; its principal divisions into parts, and the title of each; its subdivisions into subjects, historical, prophetical, poetical, doctrinal, &c.; its further subdivisions into the particular books and authors, &c. &c. A preliminary exercise of this kind will be found advantageous in several ways.

1. Pertinent questions can be found so simple as to meet the lowest capacity. 2. The members become familiar with the sound of their own voices and that of their teacher. 3. Some opinion can be formed of the average condition of the class in capacity and education. 4. A clew can be obtained to the proper course of study. 5. An idea may perhaps be given of the many common things of which we are ignorant, and a desire awakened for more light.

One or two lessons might properly follow upon the history of the sacred volume, and another upon its present position and influence upon the world. Of

course, the expediency of entering into such subjects at all, as well as the extent and manner of prosecuting the discussion if introduced, must be left to the judgment of the teacher, who is supposed to know of what materials the class is constituted.

As soon as practicable after an organization is completed, the course of exercises should be determined, and the concurrence of the class expressed,—in all these points, it is well to recognise the principle of equality as far as possible. The attendance is voluntary; and the teacher will carefully avoid a dictatorial manner and any thing like the assumption of authority.

It has been found useful to have a box fixed in some part of the Bible-class room, under lock and key, into which any member may drop a question or other communication touching any subject which may properly fall within the province of the teacher. Oftentimes a doubt or difficulty arises in the course of reading or study, or some expression of the teacher is misapprehended, or some outside suggestion has occasioned perplexity. To make a formal inquiry about it before the class would be awkward and perhaps ostentatious; but the query can be placed in the "box of difficulties," with or without the name of the depositor. The teacher at the close of each exercise removes the contents of the box, and in due time makes known his views, either to the class or to the individual, (if known,) as he may think best.

Among the topics for a series of Bible-class lessons we have noticed the following:—

The incidents in the life of our Saviour, chronologically arranged.

Fifty-two lessons on the principal events in Passion-week.

The notable women of Scripture; for a female class.

The remarkable men of Scripture; for a male class.

[The last two subjects are subdivided into women in public life, heroic women, women exemplary for domestic virtues, ambitious women, &c.; men of mark as statesmen and civilians, men of military renown, treacherous men, men of extraordinary courage, martyr men, &c.]

The miracles of our Saviour.

The leading events of Jewish history, in chronological order.

The Parables of the New Testament, topically arranged.

The missionary tours of the Apostle Paul.

One of the Epistles.

Evidences of the divinity and humanity of Christ.

The leading prophecies.

The precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, as exemplified in Scripture characters.

The evidences of Christianity, external and internal.

We have given, in the Appendix, two specimens of a course of Bible-study, both of which have been pursued with advantage and interest in very differently-constituted classes. They may be greatly improved, without doubt, and would need to be modified to suit circumstances. If of no further use, they may serve to show the design and scope of such exercises.

NOTES.

[The present volume was submitted in proof to a few friends, in different parts of the country, who are familiar with the details of Sunday-school work. They were kind enough to suggest the modification of some passages, the amplification of others, and a brief reference to one or two new points; and the fruit of these suggestions may be found in the following notes.]

Note I.—Page 22.

It is well known that the original idea of the Sunday-school had reference to the moral improvement of the most neglected and vicious class of children. In England, and other European countries where Sunday-schools are established, they are frequented, for the most part, by children and youth of what are there called the "working-class." In our country, where social distinctions of birth or wealth are of little account, the Sunday-school is eminently an institution of the *people;* and such are its attractions and advantages (when well conducted) that all classes and conditions are eager to avail themselves of it. Great as are these attractions and advantages, however, we cannot allow them to bring family instruction into disparagement. We cannot doubt that the intelligent, devout, consistent heads of a household can do

more to train up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord than the most skilful and faithful Sunday-school teacher that ever was known. There is no place in the Sunday-school more sacred than the family altar. There is no discipline in the Sunday-school so effective and natural and equable as that of the family. No force of example which a Sunday-school can exert is to be compared with that of a godly father and mother at the head of a well-regulated Christian family. And if they are competent (as we assume they are) to give their children "line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," their opportunity to do so cannot but be more favourable and their motive to do so cannot but be more powerful than any opportunity or motive found elsewhere in the wide world. Hence, with all our high appreciation of the Sunday-school as a means of moral, religious and intellectual improvement for all classes and conditions, we cannot but esteem the divine and hallowed relations of parents and children, and brothers and sisters, when properly cherished, as far more tender and endearing than any to which human institutions give birth, and, of course, opening more auspicious opportunities for the development of Christian sympathies and graces.

That grave and lamentable mistakes are made by well-meaning fathers and mothers in the religious training of their children,—that they are often repelled rather than attracted by the religious customs and observances of the family,—and that, in a great majority of cases where parents are competent to instruct their children, the duty is neglected or per-

formed too irregularly and unskilfully to answer any good end,—none will deny; and hence we do not hesitate to regard the Sunday-school as a pre-eminently valuable auxiliary to family instruction.

"You have spoken of this institution," says a discriminating friend, "as peculiarly adapted to the poor and ignorant, and designed especially for such. This I believe. Still, in the imperfectly Christianized state of so many families of the 'better class,' I think the children of such *need* its influence *equally with the poor*. My own experience leads me to feel that there is quite as much reason for discouragement in seeking to lead the children of wealth to truth and Christ as the children of poverty and ignorance, though the general impression seems to be otherwise. Young ladies of sixteen and eighteen (from such families) are often so occupied with mere intellectual pursuits, with dress and fashion and amusement, that little impression seems often to be made upon them; and while I know the Spirit can alone touch their hearts and divine grace renew them, the question often painfully recurs, 'Am I seeking to meet their real needs in the right way? Do I understand them? Am I winning them to Christ, or repelling them?'

"You will understand such feelings. I speak of them because many teachers seem to think the charge of an older class a very light and agreeable work, compared with that of young and ignorant children, demanding little effort and no sacrifice. I have sometimes wished they could know my experience with many of that age.

"I have taken older pupils not so much from choice

as from the unwillingness of most teachers to retain such; and we all desire to keep them in school as long as possible, until they become teachers themselves or duty calls them elsewhere."

NOTE II.—Page 28.

There are two opposite theories in regard to the class of children for whom the Sunday-school should provide. One would restrict its care to children who do not receive religious instruction at home. Those who adopt this view maintain that, if the children of religious parents are sent to Sunday-school, their home-instruction will be neglected. But there is certainly no reason to expect such a result. And, in point of fact, the general observation of those teachers who are most competent to judge, is that the Sunday-school acts as a strong stimulus to parental instruction, and that godly parents regard the school as a means of increasing the influence of domestic teaching. It would be strange indeed were it not so, if the Sunday-school teaching is what it should be.

The other theory to which we refer lies at the opposite extreme, and it is that the Sunday-school is capable of supplying the element of religion to the teaching of the daily school. It is to be regretted that so preposterous an idea has received favour from those who are deeply interested in the success of both religious and secular schools. Education is not a thing of parts. The broad current of influences under which the powers of the mind and the emotions of the heart are brought into exercise flows in one channel. A sick

man does not get a tepid bath by plunging first into cold water and then into warm. The waters must be mingled to produce the desired effect.

The idea has gone abroad that our Sunday-school system in the United States is the accepted substitute for distinctive religious teaching in the public schools.* It is true that our system of public schools is entirely free from denominational control, and that distinctive doctrinal instruction is not embraced by it. But it is not true, in any sense, that the religious element is excluded from them, nor that the Sunday-school undertakes to compensate for their defects in this particular.

The influence of an intelligent, consistent Christian teacher is probably as great, and possibly greater, in a public school in the United States than in a parochial school in Scotland; and yet it may not have a tinge of denominationalism. It would not be difficult for a godly man in any of our public schools to impart a measure of religious instruction to his pupils far greater in degree and more effective in quality than is given in a majority of Sunday-schools, and still not incur the disapprobation of any community of professing Christians. When our Scotch friends speak "of the failure of the American experiment to divide the process of education, assigning the secular part to the daily school and the religious part to the Sunday-school," they speak of a myth. Whatever suggestions or intimations of this kind may

* See Report of Committee of the Scotch General Assembly on Sabbath-Schools. May, 1859.

have been thrown out in speeches or sermons or newspaper essays, they may be assured that no such experiment has ever failed, for the simple reason that no such experiment has ever been tried, or even proposed.

Note III.—Page 60.

In some schools it is regarded as very important to give the pupils the feeling that it is *their* school, and that its interests are very much in their hands. Hence it has been found useful to receive from each a quarterly payment of two or three cents towards keeping up the library. It is affirmed that where this custom obtains the books are more carefully used and the privilege of the library is more highly appreciated. We are not disposed or prepared to question the expediency of such a measure; but we need not say to those who have had much intercourse with the parents of a large proportion of children, especially in city Sunday-schools, that a call for money, no matter how insignificant the sum, is apt to awaken prejudices that are not easily allayed.

Note IV.—Page 87.

It is to be feared that too many of our Sunday-school teachers regard themselves as moving along with the vast corps of labourers, flattering themselves that their individual deficiencies and neglects will escape observation, and, while others bear the burden and heat of the day, they will share in the general shout of "Harvest Home." We are confident such

persons have never reflected thoughtfully upon the folly and presumption of which they are guilty. The whole power and beneficence of the system is (under God) resolvable into the competency and fidelity of each individual teacher. Every school is part of the great agency for spreading religious knowledge throughout the ranks of our children and youth. Each school, however humble its position or pretensions, has its influence in forwarding or retarding the work, and each teacher does his part towards increasing or diminishing this influence.

What is the least that may be asked of him if he is to sustain that part with satisfaction to himself or with fidelity to his associates?

It is superfluous to say that his mind must be thoroughly furnished with Scripture knowledge and his heart warmed and sanctified by divine grace. What is just now more particularly in view is his official and personal habits. We inquire for his class-book. Mark how neatly and perfectly it is kept. How intelligible is the record of his doings, as a teacher, from the beginning of his labours until now! He can tell you at a glance the names, ages, residence, parentage, associations, habits, dispositions, capacities and attainments of all the boys that have been under his care, and will take you back for months or years and show you accurately the state and occupation of his class on any Sabbath you will name. He will tell you when, under what circumstances and with what results his last visits to his boys, or their's to him, were made. He knows what books they have read, and with what attention and intelligence; for he

is familiar with the library and uses it as his grand auxiliary. He is diligent, punctual and quiet. His example is the impersonation of his teaching; and his class cannot but see and say of him that he walks in the path which he would persuade them to enter. Let his class come in as early as it may, he is always before them, to receive and take care of them. They never can avail themselves of his absence to indulge in light and vain conversation, and thus divert and annoy the neighbouring classes and alienate their own minds from the sacred pursuits of the hour. Nor does he, for a slight cause, throw upon the superintendent or some supernumerary the duties that should be discharged by himself. During the season of praise and prayer his eye is anxiously fixed on his class, though his heart is in the exercise of devotion. He insists upon a decent and reverential deportment while in the attitude of prayer. The first appearance of frivolous or profane conduct fills him with solicitude; for he knows how fearfully such habits, even in their incipient stage, corrupt the mind and steel the heart against good influences. He follows or attends them with like anxiety to the place of public worship. His effort is, as one beautifully observes, "to inspire them with a holy reverence and cheerful affection for the sanctuary,—to weave into the tissue of their first thoughts the delightful feelings of attachment to the house of God, and to gather around the places of their youthful worship the sweet influences of reverence for truth and holiness. Reasonably does he hope that under the influence of such habits—though they may not at once become the open disciples of the Redeemer

—they will not in after-life evince that rude, vulgar insensibility to moral and religious considerations which so often meets the warm tide of Christian love as the rock repels the wave, but receive the gentle dews of grace as the desert drinks the rain."

If we pursue the relation into the active scenes of life, we shall find a watchful and almost paternal regard following the Sunday-school boy into manhood. Such a teacher as we have described never loses sight of a pupil till death separates them. Let his lot in life be what it may, he looks upon him as a husbandman looks upon a field where he has sown the most precious and costly seed. He relies on the unfailing promise of the Lord of the harvest, and never relaxes his confidence that in due season he shall reap. The tie that binds such a teacher to his class and such a class to their teacher is indissoluble. It must needs be that results lasting as eternity will flow from the relation when thus sustained.

Note V.—Page 121.

We are aware that difficulties sometimes attend the arrangement of classes in consequence of the sympathies or antipathies of parents and teachers as well as of pupils. Some parents refuse to allow their children to attend unless they can be classed with some children of their acquaintance or unless they can have a designated person for their teacher. Children also often show a will of their own; and teachers are not always disposed to forego their preferences or prejudices to comply with what they may regard as an

arbitrary classification. It is impossible to prescribe the proper course to be pursued under all circumstances. A sound discretion must be used in determining when to relax and when to enforce a rule. No substantial principle should be abandoned nor an important interest sacrificed for the sake of conciliating unreasonable opposers. And it will be generally found that one concession to mere will only prepares the way for demanding another and a greater.

Note VI.—Page 187.

The subject of providing special religious services for children on the Sabbath, instead of the ordinary services of public worship, has been discussed with great warmth and thoroughness in the Sunday-school circles of Great Britain, and, to some extent, in our own country; though, so far as we know, there has never been, even in the large conventions of teachers, a formal expression of opinion upon the expediency of such services or on the propriety of substituting them for the ordinary acts of worship; nor has any plan been proposed and generally approved for conducting them if they should be adopted. The insufficiency of the time usually occupied by country schools in the business of instruction has been generally admitted. Such is the distance of many families from the place of public worship that from two to three hours are consumed in going and returning. Most of the worshippers remain during the interval of worship; and the congregation is nearly, if not precisely, the same at both services. The recess is to afford an

opportunity for relaxation; and yet it is the only season in which the children can be collected for religious instruction. To them and to their teachers, therefore, this interval allows only a change in employment, not a suspension of it. To extend the time and enlarge the sphere of the Sunday-school, it has been proposed to give the hour succeeding the close of morning worship to a preparation of the bodies and minds of parents, teachers and children for the afternoon service,* and adapt that service particularly to the instruction of the children and youth of the congregation. By this means, it is maintained, the chief ends of a Sunday-school are answered, so far as the children are concerned, and their parents are perhaps as much benefited as by the ordinary method of employing the time.

It will be observed that few, if any, of the peculiar advantages which are supposed to attend the relation of teacher and pupil are secured by such an arrange-

* "In most of our rural parishes the morning service closes at twelve o'clock and the afternoon service commences at one,—the Sabbath-school recess, as usual, being crowded into a single hour. In many places only three-quarters of an hour is secured as the noon intermission during a considerable portion of the year; while in two-thirds, I think, of our churches the average time given to Sabbath-school instruction, exclusive of opening and closing exercises, will not exceed twenty or thirty minutes. In one town of four thousand inhabitants, for six months in the year the Sabbath services in the churches of the principal village close at twelve, and are resumed for the afternoon at half-past twelve. 'Surely the bed is shorter than that a child can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.'"—*Report of the State Missionary of Connecticut to Third Annual Convention of Sunday-School Teachers, at Bridgeport, Conn., Sept.* 1859.

ment; and it may be questioned whether a Sunday school proper—held before the morning or at the close of the afternoon service, though attended only by such children and youth as were within convenient distance—would not in the end be more effective as an instrument of religious culture. In cities and large towns there are usually two or three hours between the services, and in many churches an evening is substituted for an afternoon service. In either case there can be no apology for curtailing the time which is due to the Sunday-school. A friend, who has witnessed the results of a separate service in a school with which she was connected for many years in England, says:—

"Devoting the whole afternoon to Sunday-school instruction has worked well with us. Since we discontinued taking the scholars to church after teaching, not only have our numbers been greatly augmented, but we have had reason to believe that increased good has been achieved. Instead of lessening the value which our scholars attach to public religious services, we should incline to think it is increased. Besides, the Sunday-school duties may and should be regarded of as much importance. Is not the Sunday-school a place for the worship of God, where teachers and taught unite in prayer and praise? And does not religious instruction form the greater part of the exercises? The address is a sermon to the scholars, adapted to their comprehension and their need; for the superintendent (or other speaker) is expected to know more of the positions they severally sustain, and more of the temptations to which many of them have been exposed since they last met, than

the minister of the church, who has not the means of becoming so well acquainted with them, or who, if he had, could not always appeal to the young as a distinct part of the assembly."

The idea of a separate service entirely for children has not been favourably entertained in this country. The customary mode of conducting public worship in a place set apart for the purpose, and in forms which different communities of Christians have chosen to adopt, is regarded as among the appointed means of grace, and the *habit* of attending punctually on such a service, formed in childhood, is considered an important aid to the development of religious sympathies. Though much of the devotional and expository exercises may be above the present comprehension of the juvenile part of the congregation, yet the parts they can understand, and the associations of the time and place, and the general impression which can scarcely fail to be made, are advantages which, it is said, are not, and cannot be, secured by any separate services. If only those who comprehend and are edified by the exercises of public worship, as they are conducted in most of our churches, were allowed to attend, there would probably be a sensible reduction in most of the congregations. Were it possible to infuse the sincere milk of the word more liberally into the spiritual fare which is provided for Christian pilgrims, the babes would have a better chance for nourishment, and perhaps even men and women would find such a diet better than strong meat,—at least, for a change. Nothing could be more distasteful to both than milk-and-water.

From one of the most judicious and experienced teachers in the country we have the following:—

"On the subject of *two* sessions a day I cannot entirely agree with you. In mission schools, and where children seldom attend church, I think it desirable. But if we aim to form in children the *habit* of attending public worship, and require them so to do, I think one session sufficient among us. The result, I know, would be that most of the children would be absent from the church one part of the day, at least,—some even now seldom attending in the afternoon; and this would soon become a confirmed habit, so that when they left the Sunday-school they would soon be classed among the half-day attendants on public worship. Then, too, I fear parents would take even less pains than now to instruct their children, and would throw their sacred responsibilities even more entirely upon the teacher. For myself, I find that two services at church, especially on Communion-Sabbaths, and an hour and a half in the school, is quite sufficient to exhaust my real energy of thought and purpose. In teaching, I must throw my whole power into the subject, and I cannot do this if wearied mentally or physically. Neither can I really pray and worship if wearied. And often, even now, I reproach myself for the inert manner in which I engage in the afternoon service, when there has been no time for rest between the services. Then, too, I think *all* need the Sabbath-hour for private devotion; and not a little do I prize the quiet hour I am often able to give to some one member of my class, after the public services of the day are over, when we can converse

with freedom and obtain meetings which the common cares and duties of the week exclude us from. *Home* duties and relations, too, are not to be forgotten in our arrangements.

"But, as I have said, our school is more entirely a parish school. Were I connected with a *mission* school, such as exists in many of our cities, I should doubtless judge otherwise. I must say, however, that I am surprised and grieved at the want of instruction at *home* revealed in our schools,—of *parental* instruction,—the *direct* study and explanation of the Bible, even among those well educated and who *ought* to be *teachers*, but who so easily leave the whole duty of instruction to the teacher, who *voluntarily* undertakes *his* office. *Moral* lessons may be inculcated, it is true; but there is no such thing as reading and *studying* the Bible *with* children, among too many parents. They little know what they lose, or of how much pleasure and good they are depriving their children! For what impressions are so strong as those which unite the teachings of revelation with the loved voice of father and mother, whose tones linger in the memory until the last hour of life?"

Note VII.—Page 140.

The custom is widely prevalent in foreign Sunday-schools of "giving an address" at the afternoon session, by persons appointed for the purpose, or invited at the moment. It may be the superintendent, or the pastor of the church, one of the teachers, or a stranger. Where such a service is expected and

teachers can arrange their course of instruction with a view to it, a pertinent, sensible, brief address may be of advantage. But it may be questioned whether the interruption of the regular course of exercises for such a purpose (especially where only one session of an hour or an hour and a half is held) is not, on the whole, disadvantageous. Some teachers may be glad of the relief; but if the faithful labours of only one are thereby abridged or a favourable opportunity to give effect to an hour's teaching is thereby sacrificed, the loss is positive, while the gain is contingent.

In some schools where two sessions are held, there is a practice which very intelligent superintendents regard with favour. We refer to a general examination of the school on the lesson of the day. The person appointed to conduct such an exercise, being well prepared upon the lesson, asks such general questions as it may be supposed have occurred in the class examinations. The quarters from which the most correct answers come will ordinarily indicate where the most thorough instruction has been given. These answers being heard by all will stimulate inquiry among teachers as well as pupils. The former will have the opportunity to contrast the power of a teacher who has thoroughly studied a lesson with the power of one who has made no preparation. The latter see what good teaching has done for others, if they have not enjoyed it themselves; the general intelligence of the school is brought to view, and an invaluable opportunity afforded to concentrate the instructions of the day upon some one grand cardinal point.

This custom of a general examination is the more necessary inasmuch as few teachers, comparatively, are in the habit of reviewing a lesson. If those who are accustomed to read books or stories to their pupils in order to beguile the time would spend it in a brief, brisk and skilful review of the principal points of a lesson, (if indeed any have been made,) the effect would soon be seen in their increased attention and interest. No story can be told nor book read to a class of children that will excite and hold their attention like apt questions. "At sermons and prayers," says Archdeacon Bather, "men may sleep and wander; but when a question is asked they wake up."

We advise teachers (young teachers especially) to drop book-reading and story-telling to their pupils, and betake themselves to a course of earnest, animated questions on the lesson of the day and its application to their personal character and duty.

NOTE VIII.—Page 154.

It is the custom in some schools for two or more teachers to be present, by agreement, as soon as the scholars begin to assemble, and engage them at once in learning a new tune, or in some other agreeable way, so that, without making a task of it, they may give them such employment as will prevent their becoming disorderly or indulging in frivolous conversation before the regular exercises commence.

Note IX.—Page 179.

Perhaps there are few questions connected with the internal management of Sunday-schools more difficult to settle satisfactorily than that which relates to charitable contributions by children. It is well known that a large revenue is derived by many of our religious benevolent societies from this source; and it is capable of yielding much more. The importance of training children in habits of self-denial, encouraging in them a spirit of benevolence and making them realize that, though so young, they are already stewards of God's mercies, cannot be too deeply felt. On the other hand, we must guard against allowing this very subordinate and incidental end to assume undue prominence. Great care is needful to prevent imposition. The spirit of rivalry or competition between schools, or classes, or individual members of classes, should not be suffered to intrude itself. The contributions, however made, should be the fruit of personal industry or self-denial, and the purpose or object should be one which the contributors can understand and appreciate. We have personally known so many abuses connected with Sunday-school contributions to benevolent objects that we feel bound to urge upon those who favour them a careful superintendence of this part of our machinery.

Not long since, as a gentleman was leaving his house to attend church, a girl of ten or twelve years of age came upon the steps with a blank-book and asked him for some money for their "missionary circle." He took the book and found a certificate upon the inside of the cover, announcing that "Sallie ——

is authorized to collect funds for the Sunday-school Missionary Circle of the Sunday-school of —— —— Church." She said there were a dozen girls out at the same hour, and she would like to get the most money, if she could! They were from a strictly denominational Sunday-school, and went from door to door indiscriminately, soliciting money.

A stranger comes to town, bringing with him a blind child and a deaf mute. He says he has taken them in charge to educate. The regular and appropriate exercises of the school are suspended, (much to the joy of restless children and unprepared teachers,) while he tells a sorrowful tale in their behalf. Then the blind girl entertains them by reading from raised letters, and the deaf-mute follows with a sentence or two in signs; and then an appeal is made for aid in educating this unfortunate couple. No one asks if there are not public institutions which would offer much greater advantages, with much more certainty; but some twenty dollars is promptly put into the stranger's pocket. This may be all right and proper in this case; but how easy it would be to carry on a system of gross imposition under such a guise! Would our public schools be allowed to open their doors to such appeals? Is the spirit of intelligent benevolence increased by them?

We know of a large and flourishing Sunday-school that builds much of its fame, if not of its usefulness, upon its large annual collections and appropriations for benevolent purposes. The pupils are accustomed to solicit aid from any source that is accessible to them, and often make themselves obnoxious by their unseasonable importunity. These are extreme cases,

perhaps; but they still represent a very large class of abuses. The levying of contributions on Sunday-schools for any purpose foreign to, or inconsistent with, the plain design of their organization cannot be justified and should not be allowed.

"As to general contributions in our Sunday-schools," says an intelligent teacher of much experience, "many among us have strong objections to any thing of the kind. But if we desire to foster the spirit of benevolence among the children, especially in schools composed almost entirely of the more favoured classes among us, it seems to me to be well to devise and encourage judicious plans for stated contributions among them for direct benevolent purposes, commencing with claims nearest home, and extending operations as the funds will warrant. Only I would have it laid down as a *distinct* rule that the amount contributed should be the child's *own* gift,—the willing giving up of his own possession, or an amount in some way *earned* by him,—and not the mere contribution of his parents, obtained by the immediate asking. If the child makes some effort or sacrifice to do the good deed, the right spirit will be cherished: otherwise evil, rather than good, will result to him individually. Schools, as well as children, need to be trained in the *habit* of giving to aid others. I know instances where contributions have never been raised, even among *rich* schools, and where, after many years, the attempt has been made and proved an utter failure,—not because the children were more mean, sordid or grasping than others, but the call was new, unexpected, and altogether a strange experience to them.

Ought this state of things to exist in any school, especially in our more favoured ones?"

A teacher, and an eminently practical man, connected with a Sunday-school in a flourishing young city of Wisconsin, says:—

"The question of begging in our Sunday-school has come up lately,—*i.e.* what appeals should be made to the children, and how. We finally concluded that all the expenses of the school should be paid by assessment on the teachers, and that no collection for the purpose should be taken up anywhere.

"That the children should not be specially appealed to for any cause, nor expected to contribute at stated times, nor any competition encouraged in any way between different individuals and different classes, but that the general duty of giving should be impressed on them, and that teachers should receive and note down such voluntary contributions as might be made from Sabbath to Sabbath, and that the proceeds should be put in some channel where the fruit, if any, could be made visible, or rather audible, to the children, so as to keep up their interest; and that the children should be discouraged from begging of other people for Sunday-school contributions, if any were disposed to do so."

We were called, not long since, to teach a class in the absence of the regular teacher. At the most interesting point of the exercise, a contribution-box was introduced to the boys, and each of them put in a penny. Upon inquiring what the contribution was for, the most intelligent boy in the class (the son of a deceased clergyman) replied that it was for educating

two heathen boys, one of whom they *knew* was dead, and they didn't know that the other was alive, but supposed he was. While this paragraph is passing through the press, an old and most successful teacher tells us of a case known to him, in which contributions were continued in a school for the support of a heathen convert, after it was known he had returned to idolatry.

Such cases may be very rare; and we do not cite them to discourage the practice of contributing to this or any other class of charities. Our object is rather to excite teachers and superintendents to due care in admitting solicitations for money into their Sunday-schools, and to make the expression of sympathy on the part of children *real* and *intelligent*.

Note X.—Page 196.

We hope no one will so misapply the principle we here lay down as to measure the skill or faithfulness of a teacher by the *present* success of his labours. A visit to one of the (so-called) "mission schools" in any of our cities would soon correct any such error.

To secure the attendance of half a dozen of these street Arabs and hold them quietly to one place for the average session of a Sunday-school is a work far more difficult than to organize and superintend many a Sunday-school of two hundred ordinary children. To lodge in their memories a simple verse of Scripture or of a divine song—to awaken in them a thought of God or of eternity, or excite the feeblest sense of moral responsibility—is a great achievement; and the

history of Sunday-schools abounds with illustrations of the munificence with which such labours are rewarded. The office of a teacher in a school composed chiefly of children from the families of a Christian congregation presents many attractions which are not found in that of the teacher of a group of ignorant and ill-bred raggamuffins, collected from the courts and alleys; but there is a satisfaction in working up these rude materials and giving the first outline of form and proportion to these rough surfaces, which is found in no other province of Sunday-school labour.

We set forth in order the qualifications of teachers, and lay down principles and prescribe methods of instruction; but it would be a gross perversion of our views to suppose that teachers *without these qualifications* are not acceptable and honoured in their calling, or that teaching without regard to specific principles or methods cannot be profitable and effective. It is highly probable that by far the greatest measure of good, brought to pass by Sunday-schools, has been accomplished by teachers who worked according to their own pattern, and whose method was known only to those who were enlightened and blessed by their labours.

NOTE XI.—Page 228.

"I fear that *thorough, systematic* teaching cannot be effected without some reference to a manual or question-book. The art or capacity of framing questions at the moment all do not possess; and if a book can aid the teacher, not letting him rely upon it, I think it may often be used to advantage. The difficulty

is, question-books are used too mechanically, and promote indolence of mind in teacher and pupil. If kept in their due place, I regard them as essential helps.

"I have used none for a year past, depending solely upon my own preparation to interest my pupils, who are young ladies from seventeen to twenty years of age. I have commenced reading with them Paul's Epistles, sometimes occupying the entire hour with a few verses, and then, again, reading a chapter. They take notes as I read and explain; and often the practical application of some passage will make us quite forget the passing of the hour. The prevailing ignorance of the real meaning and purport of the Epistles, even among well-informed persons, led me to adopt this course; and I have found it very successful, both with those now under my care and with a previous class. Many of them have told me that this portion of the Scriptures was like an unsealed book to them since reading with me. I have never seen any manual on the Epistles that seemed desirable to use, and so, with the aid of the best commentaries and that of our pastor, prepare myself to read and explain as simply as possible. It requires time, indeed, and study; but I have been amply repaid in the light that has come to my own mind."

NOTE XII.—Page 224.

Few teachers are aware of the magical power of the eye to give effect to what is said or taught. Many a witness and juror has felt the appeal of that

curious organ when insensible to the most studied and eloquent utterances of the voice. The teacher's eye often gives a meaning to what he says, so forcible as to strike the heart after the sound of his words has died away upon the pupil's ear. Hence, and in conformity to a position taken in a former part of this volume, viz. that the teacher should have nothing to do when he meets his class which could have been done before, we would have his eye exempted from any duty except that of giving effect to the service of his lips.

NOTE XIII.—Page 250.

It is the practice in many schools to employ one or more persons in the specific service of visiting absentees. They make it the *missionary* department of their machinery. In favour of such a plan, it is urged that it is often difficult to find either parents or children at home when the teacher can make it convenient to call, and that some teachers are so situated as to render personal visitation impracticable. Many incidental advantages are also ascribed to such a special agency,—as the detection of truants, and the opportunity to persuade idle and straying pleasure-seekers, as well as the thoughtless and neglected, to turn their feet towards a Sunday-school. It is, moreover, claimed that such a service gives employment to some who might be indisposed to take part in the in-door work of a school.

If, for any cause, reliance is not to be placed on the teacher for a systematic performance of this duty,

the obligation devolves on the superintendent or other officer, either in person or by suitable deputy, to see that it is done seasonably and well.

It is sometimes urged as an apology for a neglect of the duty of visiting, that the families are so widely separated, especially in the country, as to render it impracticable. A correspondent in the interior of Wisconsin, where such an apology might be plausibly urged, if anywhere, says,—

"I appreciate the principle which leads you to insist upon the frequent and systematic visiting of scholars. Too much pains cannot be taken to secure acquaintance and confidence between teacher and scholar. Frequent visiting can be accomplished in nearly all communities. But when it happens that families are too much scattered to make it easy, the teacher's ingenuity will devise some substitute. Bringing the children to one's home I have often thought very pleasant and profitable."

Note XIV.—Page 266.

However energetic and successful may be the administration of a Sunday-school, and whatever the extent and measure of its influence upon the mass of society, there will be a wide field left for the most earnest and laborious efforts of those disciples of the faith who are not directly engaged in teaching. There is a region midway between the preacher in the sanctuary and the teacher in the school-room, which presents imperative claims to cultivation. The modes of operation may be adjusted to particular circumstances; but

some idea of the nature and magnitude of the work to be done may be derived from the following sketch of a scheme now in successful progress in Manchester, (England.) The church adopting it has but one hundred and fifty members, and at least half of them are females.

The work to be done is divided into five departments, each under a superintendent, who is supposed to be particularly adapted to direct the specific work confided to his or her division. The whole arrangement is under the supervision of a general committee, of which the pastor is *ex officio* chairman. The theory embraces two principles:—1. That every professing Christian is a witness for Christ; and, 2. That there is a niche of usefulness for each to fill. And as in rebuilding the ruined wall at Jerusalem in the time of Artaxerxes the various gates and towers and connecting portions were assigned to different parties,—one to the son of the apothecary, and another to the son of the goldsmith, this part to Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah, and that to Shallum (the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem) "and his daughters,"—so in the arrangements for repairing the waste places of a modern Zion it is supposed that an analogous distribution of duties is expedient. Hence we have the following divisions:—

First. Lay preaching and holding prayer-meetings in cottages. (To be exclusively under the superintendence of the pastor.)

Second. Scripture readers. (Male and female.)

Third. Mission schools. Adult classes, (male and

female,) held in the cottages of the poor; and Mothers' classes, taught by mothers.

Fourth. Visitation of the sick, infirm and aged. Relief administered under certain restrictions. Children cared for, and secular instruction secured.

Fifth. Circulation of religious books and papers,—directing to means of social improvement, and turning back the current of licentious and pestilent reading.

We are informed that the plan has succeeded well,—that the substitution of a regular system for the irregular, spasmodic efforts before relied on has proved entirely practicable; and that the employment of Christian women as missionaries among the poor, and especially among the wives of the workmen, has been attended with very satisfactory results. Of course the circuit could be indefinitely enlarged, as the working-force of each communion would allow; but the object of this note is simply to suggest the point for reflection and inquiry.

NOTE XV.—Page 267.

To those who are familiar with the history and habits of child-life in cities, it cannot be needful to supply evidence of the susceptibility of quite young children to very strong emotions. It is sometimes inexpressibly painful to witness the exhibition of violent passion in those whose physical frame would seem scarcely strong enough to bear so rude a shock. These strong impulses are not always towards the wrong. We have known a child of five years excited with indignation at a proposition that he

should go to a neighbour's and beg a pair of stockings, which he sorely needed and which his parents were too poor to supply. He would rather go barefoot than beg. Though the tendencies of a child's moral nature are strong in the direction of evil and are encouraged and strengthened by vicious associations and example,—so that we much oftener see proofs of their susceptibility of wrong than of right impressions,—still, we are not without evidence that their young natures may be stirred to grand conceptions and undertakings. We suppose that the scene in the Temple, when Jesus of Nazareth was greeted with the glad shouts of praise from the children, was something more than a mere imitation of what others did. We know that it was a household law among the Jews that, when the feast of tabernacles was to be celebrated, any child that was strong enough to carry a small bush or branch of the "goodly trees" should take thus much of an active part in the service; and it is no wonder that when our Saviour's wonderful deeds of mercy, which spread his fame far and wide, came to the ears of children, they should be moved with love towards him, nor that when he made his appearance in the Temple they should shout glad hosannas to his name.

The familiar anecdote of Edward VI. of England shows how deep was his emotion of reverence for the volume of inspiration. When but six or seven years of age, and engaged in play, he wanted to obtain something which was beyond his reach. A companion brought him a large book to stand on. As soon as he perceived that it was the Bible, he reproved his play-

mate for such irreverence, and, lifting it carefully from the floor, kissed it, and then replaced it on the shelf. There is no reason to doubt that such a feeling might become as general as it is now rare, if precept and example were combined to excite it.

But the most wonderful illustration of the susceptibility of young minds to strong religious impressions or sympathies which history affords, is the crusade of the children in the thirteenth century. The religious enthusiasm which had pervaded Italy and France in the expeditions to wrest the Holy City from the hands of infidels, had not entirely subsided when, in 1212, a shepherd-boy named Etienne, (Stephen,) residing in a village of Vendôme, France, proclaimed himself an ambassador from Christ to the CHILDREN. He at once went among them, explained his purpose, and persuaded several to adopt a woollen cross attached to their clothes, and to pledge themselves to go to Jerusalem and rescue the supposed sepulchre of Christ from his enemies and restore it to his followers. The shepherd-boys of the neighbourhood gathered about him, and some thousands were eager to receive his revelations and to be enchanted by his discourses. Every day new prophets, eight or ten years old, appeared, preached, and, as it was affirmed, worked miracles and led hosts of children to "holy Etienne," as he was called. No persuasion of friends, no tears or prayers of mothers, could keep back the boys. Were they hindered, they wept day and night,—pined with sorrow: so that at last necessity was laid upon their parents to let them go. They were joined by many girls in boys' clothing. A procession of thirty

thousand set off from Vendôme to Marseilles,—none doubting Etienne's promise that the sea would go back before them and they would reach the Holy Land dry-shod. Two villanous merchants of Marseilles promised to take them to Palestine for God's blessing only, and gained the confidence of a sufficient number to fill seven ships. Two of the ships were wrecked, all on board being lost; and the whole of the young crusaders in the other five were sold as slaves to the Saracens,—none ever seeing their native land again. A similar child-crusade took place in Germany at the same time, but embraced only twelve or fifteen thousand.

The credulity with which Etienne's story was received is surprising. It was said and believed that even the dumb sheep which the enthusiastic boy was tending recognised his leadership and kneeled before him!

However superstitious, and even ridiculous, this movement may have been both in its origin and aim, it clearly shows how the deep sympathies of children may be awakened, and of what earnest and heroic deeds they are capable. Why are we so slow to recognise their susceptibility of religious emotions that spring from a purer source and impel to higher and holier enterprises?

Note XVI.—Page 271.

"What you have said of the first impressions made upon the pupil by his teacher moved me deeply. My mother was my only teacher; for, though my father's early departure caused a double duty to

devolve upon her in the training of the little band committed to her care, she was never willing to yield her responsibilities to others, even in the school-hour. My personal experience as a pupil, therefore, differs from that of many. As a teacher it has been otherwise. I might tell you of notes received and words uttered that have repaid me a hundred-fold for every effort or sacrifice made; but such experiences, I am sure, you are familiar with. Only let me say one word on first impressions. A faithful and earnest fellow-teacher has often referred to the first hymn selected for her when, as a timid child, she was placed under my care, and has expressed the implicit reliance placed on my words, which, then unknown to me, contributed to form a character of unusual worth and promise. Another, who left me at the age of twelve, removing from town to another home, wrote me, not long since, that the deep interest she now feels in the church and in her duties as a teacher, she traces, in a great measure, to the first impressions of those early and brief years of instruction. And yet she was the one of all my number then whom I should have singled out as taking little interest in the class,—her manner being indifferent, and her whole appearance rather dull and not prepossessing.

"I feel more and more deeply the sacredness and importance of the vocation and the need of bringing to it the best treasures of mind and of heart. Would that all the available working force of our congregations could be brought into its service, as it surely ought to be!"

NOTE XVII.—Page 286.

"Our teachers greatly need to learn *how* to teach; and I am sure our schools suffer from want of some regular training in the teacher similar, in many respects, to what so many are now receiving in what are called normal schools. But just here lies the practical difficulty that I do not quite see how to solve; and I will state it as it has frequently presented itself to my own experience. A young lady with a fair education, good character, serious and earnest in the desire to do good, expresses the desire to become a Sunday-school teacher; and, if a class chances to be vacant, or new pupils can be obtained, she is at once installed in her office, in consideration of her general religious character, without examination as to her fitness or aptitude to teach, and without any previous instruction how to teach, unless she has long been a member of the school,—in which case she will probably follow the example and course of her teacher, without much thought or inquiry as to whether it is the best course and method, or not; or, if she has never been a pupil, (as is sometimes the case,) she commences her duties almost wholly ignorant of what is to be the practical working of her plan. Now, where is the power to be lodged by which the competency of such an individual is to be tested before she is allowed to become a teacher?

"Many say they would never undertake the duties of teachers if any examination were required,—some

proof, I think, that they are conscious of disqualification for the work.

"Then, again, the superintendents in many schools are little fitted to make such examinations, being chosen to regulate the general affairs of the school, rather than on account of peculiar mental ability or adaptation to their work, — many schools finding it exceedingly difficult to get any one to accept the office, especially in our smaller towns. But, supposing such a one qualified for the work, he fears wounding the feelings of others if he rejects any who offer to become teachers; and if the pastor thinks well of them, no further questions are asked, but each individual is to prove his or her fitness for the office by the success or failure which a few weeks or months will surely reveal, — little regard being had to the impression made on young hearts concerning the first truths of salvation, and whether through their teacher they are drawn to Christ or repelled from all serious thought. I do not see how these things are to be remedied, unless in every school there is some regular system of intellectual and moral study, through which the individual may pass before becoming a teacher, connected with which is a class especially to learn the art of teaching.

"But here arises another want. Who is to conduct such classes? Who is to carry on pupils in the higher branches of religious inquiry, especially in our parish schools, where this high standard is becoming more and more essential as our young people are yearly receiving higher advantages in our public schools? I know of none among our own band of teachers capable of con-

ducting a teachers' meeting or Bible-class in the way you describe,—teaching others how to teach,—not from want of ability or of a true interest in their work, but simply because they have never been accustomed to such a course. Now, who is to teach them how to teach others how to teach? The materials may be found in very many schools, but the master hand and mind are wanting. Teachers' institutes aid in some measure; but isolated schools are excluded from all participation in such measures. I know of one school where the pastor chose a committee of gentlemen from his parish to form an examining-committee in reference to the fitness of individuals for the office of teachers; but I fear some of the gentlemen knew less of what was needed, practically, than the teachers!"

NOTE XVIII.—Page 305.

We may be allowed, perhaps, to inquire whether the various auxiliaries to the church and ministry which have become permanent are not worthy of more liberal accommodation in the plan of our edifices for public worship. There is certainly a very gratifying improvement in this respect; and, as the utility and necessity of these appendages become more apparent, they will receive still more consideration. In most modern church-edifices we find suitable apartments for public and social worship,—for the Sunday-school, and for the spiritual and temporal authorities of the church. But there is rarely the needful accommodation for Bible-classes and other associations which

require organization and some degree of formality in order to their success. A proper Bible-class room should have furniture adapted to its use, and the class occupying it for the time-being should be regarded as its exclusive occupants. Four such rooms, with plain but comfortable furniture and with suitable arrangements for warming and ventilating, and capacious enough to seat twenty-five persons comfortably, should be connected with every house of public worship for a congregation of average size in our principal cities. No church having a membership of two hundred should be satisfied without having at least fifty youth between fifteen and twenty under the very best religious instruction which she can command. To divide and classify them properly, separate apartments are indispensable; and their cost will be refunded many times over by the revenue in numbers, strength and spiritual prosperity which (with the promised blessing of God) will accrue from them.

NOTE XIX.—Page 314.

In many cases the province of a Bible-class teacher may be extended without impertinence so as to embrace many interests in the life of a pupil beyond mere scriptural instruction,—his associations in life, so far as they affect his moral or religious character, —his intellectual habits and pursuits,—the books and papers he reads,—and his plans and general employments. Especially is such a course proper where the individual does not enjoy the advantage of a judicious parent's counsel. The teacher will, of course, require

much wisdom to know when and how to interpose such offices so as not to alienate and offend by a seeming intrusion.

It is not well for a teacher to show a disposition to evade a question which comes properly within the subject of a lesson; nor should he treat it with indifference, however superficial it may show the querist's knowledge to be. I well remember being present at a Bible-class of forty or fifty young men, in a Western city, taught by a gentleman eminently qualified for the duty; and in the course of the exercise a question was asked respecting the method of reconciling a certain text with another. The teacher declined to answer, observing that it would take them into a more extended discussion than it would be profitable to pursue. Perhaps it would not have been wise to allow the discussion to be opened; but it may be questioned whether such a reason for declining to answer would be likely to satisfy one who had been perplexed by the question which it cost him no little sacrifice of feeling to ask. It is not difficult to show a person of ordinary intelligence and candour a satisfactory reason for abstaining from curious, unprofitable inquiries; and when it would be injudicious to open a subject of this nature for *general* debate, it might very properly and safely be discussed in a private interview. Our's is an inquisitive age, and superficial or evasive replies to reasonable questions are at a large discount.

APPENDIX.

A COURSE

OF

DOCTRINAL AND PRECEPTIVE INSTRUCTION FOR A BIBLE-CLASS,

THE MEMBERS OF WHICH HAVE ENJOYED THE AVERAGE ADVANTAGES OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

§ I. OF THE FIRST RECORDED SIN.

1. Of the first recorded sin, the circumstances and effects, immediate and remote.

2. Of the first intimation of mercy, its terms, and their meaning and force.

3. Of the second recorded sin and its aggravations, and the instruction to be derived from it as it regards God's government and our relations to it.

4. Of the moral condition of mankind at the earliest period of the world of which we have any account, and how far and in what respects better or worse than at any later period.

5. Of Noah and the deluge, as an exhibition of the mercy and severity of God's dealings with men.

6. Of the confusion of tongues, its causes and consequences.

7. Of the call of Abram, whence, why and whither?

8. Of God's dealings with Abraham as an individual, and as the father of the faithful.

9. Of the leading traits in the characters of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

10. Of Moses, his history, office and typical character.

11. Of the Exodus of the Jewish people, and what we may learn from it of the nature of God's government.
12. Of the moral law, its force and permanency.
13. Of the ceremonial law and its uses.
14. Of the Jews as a nation under the judges.
15. Of the Jews as a nation under the kings.
16. The chief privileges and calamities of the Jews as a nation.
17. Of the prophets and their office.

The course on the New Testament may be arranged on the same principle.

§ II. OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

1. What are the Holy Scriptures, and why are they so called?
2. By what other names are the sacred writings called, and what is the derivation and meaning of each?
3. What other writings claim to be of divine authority, and how is the claim shown to be invalid?
4. What is inspiration?
5. What are some of the controverted points respecting the inspiration of the sacred writings?
6. What evidence is there that the Scriptures are inspired?
7. What kind and degree of inspiration are claimed for the Bible?
8. In what languages were the Scriptures originally written?
9 How are we assured that any given version truly and properly expresses the ideas of the original?
10. When was the commonly-received version of the English Bible made?
11. By whom was it made, and with what precautions and safeguards?
12. What other versions are there in use, and why is the commonly-received version preferred?
13. How are the Scriptures divided?
14. What is the meaning of the word "Testament"?
15. What is its force when applied to the Scriptures?

16. What are the common general divisions of the Old Testament?

17. What are the common general divisions of the New Testament?

18. Is there any difference between the Old and the New Testament in respect to their authority?

19. What is meant by "the canon of Scripture"?

20. How, when and by whom was the number of canonical books determined?

21. What are the names of the books of the Old Testament in their order?

22. What are the names of the books of the New Testament in their order?

23. When and by whom, and for what purpose was the division of the Bible into chapters and verses made?

24. What is the book called which enables us to find any passage by knowing any important word in it, and why is it so called?

25. What is necessary to make the reading of the Bible profitable?

26. What is necessary to make the reading of the Bible a means of salvation?

27. What advantages do we possess for understanding the Scriptures which were unknown till within a few years?

28. How may we prove our obligation to circulate the Bible?

29. What is meant by the word "*rule*," when applied to moral subjects?

30. What is a rule of faith?

31. What is a rule of duty?

32. In what sense is the Bible a rule both of faith and duty?

33. How may we prove that we are not only authorized, but commanded, to determine, each for himself, what the Holy Scriptures require us to believe and to do?

34. What is this right usually called?

35. What are the alleged evils which flow from the allowance of the right of private interpretation?

36. What is the opposite doctrine, and how and by whom is it maintained?

37. What are the evils which flow from a denial or restriction of the right of private interpretation?

38. What is substituted by those who refuse the right of private interpretation?

39. In what consist the fallacy and danger of the papal dogma on this subject?

40. How shall we account for the various and often conflicting opinions of men of intelligence and piety respecting the doctrines and precepts of the Bible?

41. When and for what purpose were Bible Societies organized, and what have been the fruits and effects of their labours?

§ III. OF THE LOST STATE OF MAN.

1. What do we know of man's origin?

2. For what end was man created?

3. What counsel preceded his creation?

4. In what form or likeness was he created?

5. With what qualities, capacities and privileges was he endowed?

6. What was required of the first man?

7. Did he stand in any peculiar relation to the race that should spring from him?

8. Whence came woman?

9. For what end was she created?

10. By whom and by what means was she tempted to sin?

11. Who tempted Adam to sin?

12. What were the first-fruits of the disobedience of our first parents?

13. What curse was pronounced on them?

14. What curse was pronounced on the tempter?

15. In what relations did the sin of our first parents place them towards God?

16. In what relations did the sin of our first parents place them towards their posterity?

17. Who first suffered death, and what was the cause of it?

18. What was signified to our first parents by the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head?

19. What evidence have we that our first parents were, and that all their posterity have been and are conscious, of their alienation from God and of a desert of punishment?

20. Is sin punished in this world?

21. How do we reconcile it with the justice of God that the good often suffer, and the wicked often prosper, in this world?

22. What is justly inferred from this feature of God's providential government?

23. What evidence do the Scriptures furnish that the impenitent will be punished endlessly in a future world?

24. What evidence is derived from the attributes of God, and from the revealed principles of his government, to prove the same doctrine?

25. What evidence results from analogy to prove the same doctrine?

26. What consequences would necessarily result from the opposite doctrine?

27. What influence does the doctrine of the lost state of man by nature and his exposure to endless punishment, necessarily exert on those who really believe it?

§ IV. OF THE METHOD OF SALVATION.

1. What are some of the terms or phrases by which the Scriptures describe the recovery of man from his lost state?

That the reader may have some idea of the sort of preparation which would be required to teach a class profitably with such a series of questions, we subjoin the notes on this single question which were made by a teacher whose leisure was, perhaps, as little as most teachers enjoy.

Regeneration—born again. John iii. 3. James i. 18. 1 Pet. iii. 23.

Renewed. Romans xii. 2.

Passed from death unto life. John v. 24. 1 John iii. 14.

Born of God. John i. 13. Meaning of the phrase—1 John v. 1.
Born of the Spirit. John iii. 5.
Translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Col. i. 13.
Out of light into darkness. Eph. v. 8.
Dying to sin and living to righteousness. 1 Pet. ii. 24.
Reconciled. Col. i. 21.
Made alive from the dead. Col. ii. 13.
Quickened. Gal. ii. 5. Eph. ii. 1, 5.
Raised. Eph. ii. 5.
Sealed. Eph. iv. 20.
New creature. Gal. vi. 15.
Washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. John iii. 5.
Transformed. Rom. xii. 2.
New man. Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10.

It cannot be doubted that from such a variety of terms used to describe one and the same moral phenomena, a more perfect and impressive idea is obtained of its nature and importance than could be derived from the best explanation of any single term or phrase; and hence the teacher who has the opportunity and means, and fails to prepare himself to make this impression, incurs a serious responsibility.

2. What is the meaning of each of these terms and phrases, in the order in which you have named them?

3. By what influence is this work of grace commenced and carried on?

4. What is meant by the grace of God, and in what sense is it sovereign?

5. What is meant by the free grace of God, and by the sustaining grace of God?

6. Why is the influence referred to in Question 3 needful to secure the recovery of man from his lost state?

7. What are some of the most common ways in which this divine influence is exerted?

8. What is the etymology and meaning of the word "atonement?"

9. What is the meaning of the phrase, "blood of atonement?"

10. What aid may we derive from the Jewish ritual in understanding the gospel doctrine of atonement for sin?

11. What is meant by the phrase the "righteousness of Christ"?

12. How is the righteousness of Christ made available for the justification of sinners?

13. In what sense is Christ the Redeemer of men?

14. What are the essential elements of the gospel scheme of salvation?

15. What is revealed to us concerning the nature, attributes and offices of Jesus Christ?

I. His nature.

(*a*) What positive testimony does the Bible furnish on this subject?

(*b*) What necessary inferences result from such Scripture testimony?

(*c*) What difficulties attend a demand of the divine nature of Christ?

II. His attributes.

(*a*) What is meant by the term "attribute"?

(*b*) What attributes has Christ belonging to the Godhead?

(*c*) What attributes has Christ peculiar to his mediatorial character?

(*d*) What attributes has Christ peculiar to his present exaltation?

III. His offices.

(*a*) In what sense is Christ a prophet, and what scriptures present him in this relation?

(*b*) In what sense is Christ a priest, and what scriptures present him in this relation?

(*c*) In what sense is Christ a king, and what scriptures present him in this relation?

16. How is the doctrine of Christ's atonement affected by admitting or denying his divinity?

17. What do the Scriptures teach us concerning the nature and office of the Holy Spirit?

18. How does he enlighten the minds of men?

19. How are his influences consistent with the freedom of human action?

20. How may his influence be resisted, and what is the effect of resisting it?

21. How are his influences invited and cherished?

22. By what terms or phrases do the Scriptures describe the work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of men?

23. How may it be known that we have been made the subjects of regeneration?

24. How may we know that we have not been made the subjects of renewing grace?

25. What do the Scriptures teach us concerning the nature and power of evil spirits?

26. How may the power of evil spirits be resisted and overcome?

§ V. OF FAITH, REPENTANCE AND HOLY LIVING.

1. What is faith?

2. How are the various kinds of faith distinguished, and what are some of the instances of each?

3. What are some of the evidences of saving faith recognised in the Scriptures?

4. What are the fruits of saving faith?

5. What importance do the Scriptures attach to faith?

6. What remarkable instances of faith are recorded in the Scriptures? I. under the old dispensation; II. under the new.

7. What are the kinds of faith to which reference is made in Matt. xvii. 20, Acts xiv. 9, Heb. xi. 33, James v. 15.

8. How may faith be strengthened?

9. How may faith be weakened?

10. What is repentance?

11. How may we distinguish between genuine and spurious repentance?

12. What are the most certain evidences of true repentance?

13. What are some of the necessary fruits of repentance?
14. What importance do the Scriptures attach to repentance?
15. What connection has repentance with salvation?
16. What are some of the chief motives to repentance?
17. In what sense is repentance the gift of God?
18. What remarkable instances of true and spurious repentance are given in the Scriptures?
19. What is meant by the phrase "holy living"?
20. In what sense is this phrase used in the Bible?
21. What is opposed to a holy life, and how may the dividing line be determined?
22. Why should men strive to be holy?
23. What are the obstacles to a holy life?
24. What are the helps to a holy life?
25. What are the advantages of a holy life?

§ VI. OF A CONFESSION OF FAITH.

1. What is meant by "confessing Christ before men"?
2. Why should such a confession be open and public?
3. What is implied in making such a confession?
4. What is implied in declining to make such a profession?
5. What qualifications are needful to make such a confession proper?
6. To what dangers are persons exposed in making a profession of religion?
7. What are the peculiar duties and obligations of professors of religion?
8. What are some of the common excuses for declining to make a profession of religion, and how are they shown to be vain?
9. Under what circumstances may a public confession of Christ be dispensed with?

It is not irrelevant or needless to say that a Bible-class room should not be open to casual visitors. We have been often indebted to the courtesy of a superin-

tendent or friend for a sight of the various departments of a Sunday-school; but we never entered a Bible-class room on such a circuit without regretting the needless interruption and embarrassment of which we were the unwilling occasion.

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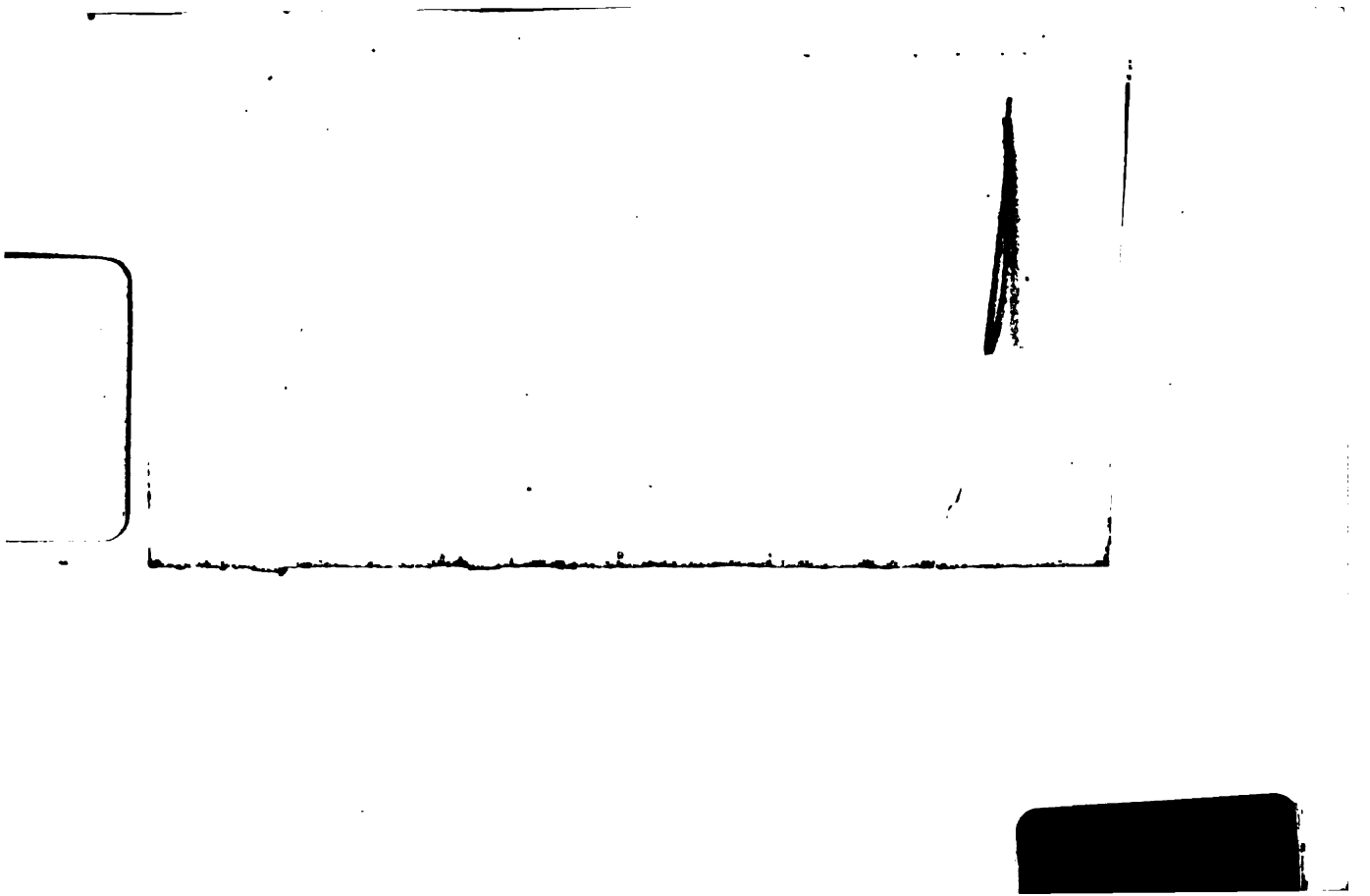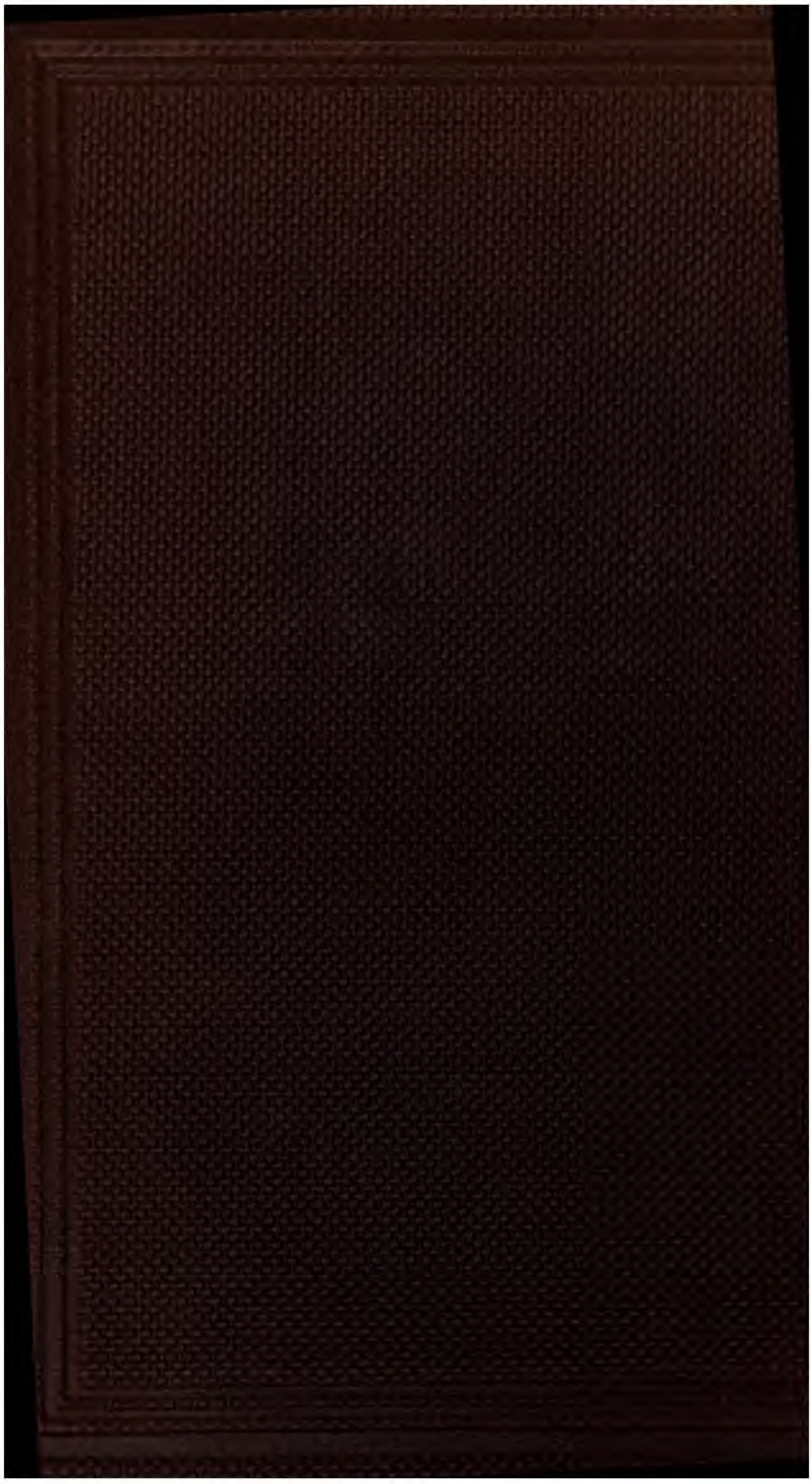
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